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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF JUDAISM

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THE EARLY MODERN WORLD, 1500–1815

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JONATHAN KARP

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of our colleague, contributor, and friend Elliott Horowitz, a pioneering scholar of early modern Jewish history, and an inspiration in our field, who died on March 18, 2017, as this volume was nearing completion.

זכרונו לברכה: May his memory be a blessing.

We also dedicate the volume to William ("Bill") Pencak, a leading scholar of early American history, including American Jewish history, and a passionately energetic writer, editor, and teacher. Bill died on December 9, 2013, not long after completing his contribution for this volume.

CONTENTS

List of Figures *page* xi

Introduction 1
JONATHAN KARP, *History and Judaic Studies Departments, Binghamton University, State University of New York*
ADAM SUTCLIFFE, *Department of History, King's College London*

PART I THE WORLD OF EARLY MODERN JEWRY, *c*.1500–1650 13

1 The Catholic Church and the Jews 15
KENNETH STOW, *Emeritus, Department of Jewish History, University of Haifa*

2 Judaism and Protestantism 50
R. PO-CHIA HSIA, *Department of History, Pennsylvania State University*

3 The Rise of Ottoman Jewry 77
JOSEPH R. HACKER, *Emeritus, Department of Jewish History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

4 The Shifting Legal and Political Status of Early Modern Jewries 113
ANDREAS GOTZMANN, *Department of Religious Studies, University of Erfurt*

5 Jews and the Early Modern Economy 139
FRANCESCA TRIVELLATO, *Department of History, Yale University*

6 The Early Modern Jewish Community and its Institutions 168
ELISHEVA CARLEBACH, *Department of History, Columbia University*

PART II THEMES AND TRENDS IN EARLY MODERN JEWISH LIFE 199

7 Iberia and Beyond: *Judeoconversos* and the Iberian Inquisitions 201
DAVID GRAIZBORD, *Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, The University of Arizona*

8 The Establishment of East European Jewry 226
ISRAEL BARTAL, *Emeritus, Department of Jewish History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

9 Linguistic Transformations: Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) 257
MATTHIAS B. LEHMANN, *Department of History, University of California, Irvine*

10 Continuity and Change in Early Modern Yiddish Language and Literature 274
JEAN BAUMGARTEN, *Emeritus, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris*

11 Jewish Book Culture Since the Invention of Printing (1469 – *c.* 1815) 291
EMILE G. L. SCHRIJVER, *Jewish Cultural Quarter, Amsterdam, and University of Amsterdam*

12 The Christian Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe 316
THEODOR DUNKELGRÜN, *Center for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Cambridge*

13 Rabbinic Culture and the Historical Development of Halakhah 349
JAY R. BERKOVITZ, *Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst*

14 Discipline, Dissent, and Communal Authority in the Western Sephardic Diaspora 378
YOSEF KAPLAN, *Emeritus, Department of Jewish History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

15 Education and Homiletics 407
MARC SAPERSTEIN, *Department of Jewish Studies, Leo Baeck College, London*

16 Dimensions of Kabbalah from the Spanish Expulsion to the Dawn of Hasidism 437
LAWRENCE FINE, *Emeritus, Department of Religion, Mount Holyoke College*

17 Magic, Mysticism, and Popular Belief in Jewish Culture (1500–1815) 475
J. H. CHAJES, *Department of Jewish History, University of Haifa*

18 Sabbatai Zevi and the Sabbatean Movement 491
MATT GOLDISH, *Department of History, The Ohio State University*

19 Science, Medicine, and Jewish Philosophy 522
ADAM SHEAR, *Department of Religious Studies, University of Pittsburgh*

20 Port Jews Revisited: Commerce and Culture in the Age of European Expansion 550
LOIS C. DUBIN, *Department of Religion, Smith College*

21 Jews in the Polish–Lithuanian Economy (1453–1795) 576
ADAM TELLER, *Department of History, Brown University*

22 Jewish Piety and Devotion in Early Modern Eastern Europe 607
GLENN DYNNER, *Department of Religion, Sarah Lawrence College*

23 The Rise of Hasidism 625
MOSHE ROSMAN, *Jewish History Department, Bar Ilan University*

24 Enlightenment and Haskalah 652
EDWARD BREUER, *Department of Jewish History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

25 Women, Water, and Wine: The Paradoxical Piety of Early Modern Jewry 677
ELLIOTT HOROWITZ, *formerly Department of Jewish History, Bar-Ilan University*

26 Jews, Judaism, and the Visual Arts 706
MARC MICHAEL EPSTEIN, *Department of Religion, Vassar College*

27 Musical Dilemmas of Early Modern Jews 718
EDWIN SEROUSSI, *Department of Musicology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

PART III THE JEWISH WORLD, *c*.1650–1815 735

28 Judaism in Germany (1650–1815) 737
DEBORAH HERTZ, *Department of History, University of California, San Diego*

29 The Making of Habsburg Jewry in the Long Eighteenth Century 763
MICHAEL K. SILBER, *Emeritus, Department of Jewish History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

30 The Jews of Poland–Lithuania (1650–1815) 798
FRANÇOIS GUESNET, *Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University College London*

31 Jews in the Ottoman Empire (1580–1839) 831
Joseph R. Hacker, *Emeritus, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

32 The Jews of Italy (1650–1815) 864
Francesca Bregoli, *History Department, Queens College of the City University of New York*

33 Locals: Jews in the Early Modern Dutch Republic 894
Bart T. Wallet, *History Department, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam*
Irene E. Zwiep, *Department of Jewish Studies, University of Amsterdam*

34 The Jews of France (1650–1815) 923
Jay R. Berkovitz, *Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst*

35 The Jews of Great Britain (1650–1815) 949
Todd M. Endelman, *Emeritus, Department of History, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*

36 The Jews in the Early Modern Caribbean and the Atlantic World 972
Wim Klooster, *Department of History, Clark University*

37 The Jews in Early North America: Agents of Empire, Champions of Liberty 997
William Pencak, *formerly Department of History, Pennsylvania State University*

38 The Jews of Africa and Asia (1500–1815) 1022
Tudor Parfitt, *Department of Religious Studies, Florida International University*

39 The Jews of Iran in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries 1046
Vera B. Moreen, *Independent Scholar*

40 Toleration, Integration, Regeneration, and Reform: Rethinking the Roots and Routes of "Jewish Emancipation" 1058
Adam Sutcliffe, *Department of History, King's College London*

41 Looking Backward and Forward: Rethinking Jewish Modernity in the Light of Early Modernity 1089
David B. Ruderman, *Department of History, University of Pennsylvania*

Index 1111

FIGURES

Map A	Europe in 1559. Merry E. Wiesner Hanks, *Early Modern Europe, 1450–1789* (Cambridge, 2006), map 5	*page* xiii
Map B	Europe after the Peace of Westphalia, 1648. Merry E. Wiesner Hanks, *Early Modern Europe, 1450–1789* (Cambridge, 2006), map 10	xiv
Map C	The Ottomans in the Mediterranean world, *c.* 1600. Adapted from Palmira Brummett, *Mapping the Ottomans* (Cambridge, 2015), p. xviii	xv
Map D	Jewish centers in early modern Europe. Adapted from Judith R. Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin (eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion and Culture* (Cambridge, 2010), map 6.1	xvi
8.1	Partitions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, 1793, and 1795. Adapted from © User: Halibutt/Wikimedia Commons/ CC-BY-SA-3.0	231
11.1	*Siddur* [Daily Prayers], printed decorated border with handwritten text. Vienna, Aryeh ben Judah Leib of Trebitsch, 1712–14. New York, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, MS 9340.	303
11.2	*Perek Shirah* [Chapter of Song]. Vienna, Meshullam Zimmel ben Moses of Polna (Bohemia), 1719. Zurich, Braginsky Collection, BCB 257.	304
11.3	Esther scroll, printed decorated border designed by Francesco Griselini, with handwritten text. Venice, 1746. Zurich, Braginsky Collection, BCS 13.	306
11.4	*Otot ha-'Ahavah* [Signs of Love], Hebrew manuscript on paper. Amsterdam, 1748. Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam, Otot 1748042.	307
11.5	Baḥya ben Asher, *Kad ha-Kemaḥ* [Jar of Flour], with five different censors' signatures: Camillo Jaghel, Luigi da Bologna 1600, Laurentius Franguellus, Renato da Modena 1626, and Girolamo da Durazzano 1640. Constantinople, no printer, 1515. Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam, ROG A-611.	312

29.1 The Jews of the Habsburg Empire: late eighteenth century. Evyatar Friesel, *Atlas of Modern Jewish History* (New York, 1990), [34–5.] Map composed by Michael K. Silber. 766

32.1 The Italian states in 1750. Adapted from Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford, 2014). Copyright © by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University. All rights reserved, Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Stanford University Press, sup.org. 866

36.1 African slavery in the Americas, *c*. 1770. Adapted from Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and Their Shared History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2009), [map 8.1] 976

Map A Europe in 1559.

Map B Europe after the Peace of Westphalia, 1648.

Map C The Ottomans in the Mediterranean world, *c.* 1600.

Map D Jewish centers in early modern Europe.

INTRODUCTION

JONATHAN KARP AND ADAM SUTCLIFFE

The term "early modern" is notoriously ambiguous, if not oxymoronic. It also remains, even a half-century after its introduction into historical studies, controversial. As one recent critic has complained, the world between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries "was not in any way 'modern,' and certainly not in any way an 'early' form of modernity."[1] "Early modern" is indeed a cumbersome and loaded term, but nevertheless not one likely to be soon displaced or replaced. This is because the period covered under this rubric, from the age of Renaissance and Reformation at the beginning to the era of the Atlantic Revolutions at the end, is too distinctive and integral to be subsumed under such labels as "medieval" or "modern." It is an age in its own right as far as such matters as international trade, state building, religious transformation, communications, global exploration, and the development of political thought are concerned. In this sense, however legitimate the terminological criticisms leveled against it, "early modern" really only serves as a convenient shorthand designation for a necessary and essential periodization.

Does this periodization make sense, though, in the specific context of Jewish history? It is not obvious that the landmark moments in Christian religious or European cultural history that open the period should coincide with those of Judaism, or that the revolutions of the late eighteenth century, at its close, were of great transformative consequence for Jews, most of whom lived far from the places where those events resonated most strongly. The implicit teleology in the very term "early modern" also raises particular questions in relation to Jews, whose relationship to modernity has been, both during this period and since, notably complex and contested. While "the early modern period" started to become a fashionable designation among historians in the 1940s and 1950s, it has only quite

[1] Jack A. Goldstone, "The Problem of the 'Early Modern' World," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, 3 (1998), 294; see, similarly, Randolf Starn, "The Early Modern Muddle," *Journal of Early Modern History* 6 (2002), 296–307.

recently become widely employed by Jewish historians. Prior to the 1985 publication of Jonathan Israel's *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, the first work to put forth a coherent and self-conscious claim for an early modern period in Jewish history, a number of Jewish historians had focused on this period (roughly 1500–1800) and discussed its outstanding features. What is interesting is that to one degree or another all characterized this age as both essentially medieval and, despite moments of creative efflorescence, one primarily defined by crisis. That which was incipiently modern in the period, these historians suggested in various ways, was more the internal crumbling of the older forms of Jewish society than the construction of anything genuinely new, while that which was truly new and progressive was by and large only what managed to seep into an insular Jewish society from general European culture and ideas.

For the pioneering nineteenth-century Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz, these centuries were marked above all by intellectual decline and the rise of superstition, what he labeled "a general demoralization of Judaism,"[2] while for the great Russian-Jewish historian Simon Dubnow the contrast between general European cultural dynamism and Jewish persecution and stagnation could not be sharper. "At the time," Dubnow observes, "when the medieval period had formally come to a close for occidental Christendom ... the middle ages continued in unmitigated brutality for the Jews."[3] True, the twentieth-century sociologist and historian Jacob Katz did present a somewhat more balanced view. Appearing in Hebrew in 1958, Katz's *Tradition and Crisis* has sometimes been taken as the first work attempting to come to terms with a Jewish early modern period, but such an assessment is exaggerated. As its title indicates, Katz's volume, in so far as it deals with the roots of modern Jewish life, focuses overwhelmingly (in its second half) on the erosion of traditional structures, such as rabbinic authority. When it does report on new trends, particularly in the form of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) in western and central Europe and Hasidism in the east, it offers no clear analysis of how these key developments emerged, but instead only a treatment of how they further contributed to tradition's displacement.[4]

In understanding the dynamics of late medieval "crisis," Katz relied heavily on the revolutionary scholarly insights of Kabbalah scholar

[2] Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. V (Philadelphia, 1895), 199–232.

[3] Simon Dubnow, *Nationalism and History: Letters on Old and New Judaism*, ed. Koppel S. Pinson (Philadelphia, 1958), 306. To be fair, Dubnow provides a more nuanced depiction in his *History of the Jews*, vol. IV (South Brunswick, NJ, 1971), 17–21.

[4] Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, ed. and trans. Bernard D. Cooperman (Syracuse, NY, 2000).

Gershom Scholem. Like Katz, Scholem did not employ the term "early modern," but he did likewise view the centuries following 1492 as ones of crisis and creativity. In Scholem's imaginative rendering, an unfolding and dynamic response to the theological problem of Jewish exile led, in a pattern of "dialectical" twists and turns, to the widespread dissemination of new, redemptive forms of Kabbalah (especially that created by the sixteenth-century mystic Isaac Luria) that crystallized in the failed messianic mass movement of Sabbatai Zevi (1666) and thence splintered into a host of movements as disparate as Hasidism and Reform Judaism. Even more so than Katz, Scholem's historical outlook was shaped by Zionism, by its characterization of Jewish diaspora existence as rooted in exilic crisis and its understanding of the period immediately preceding the modern as one in which exilic tensions finally became unbearable.[5]

Desiccation, decay, atrophy, and above all crisis – these are the terms and concepts which long tended to dominate depictions of the early modern era *avant la lettre*.[6] One of the important developments in historical scholarship of the last several decades – broadly reflected in the present volume – has been to offer a more variegated and frequently more positive, or at least more balanced, picture. This re-evaluation was first crystallized in the aforementioned study by Jonathan Israel, a specialist in the history of the early modern Dutch Republic. Unlike his predecessors, Israel did not see this epoch as a mere extension of the Middle Ages (or an extended crisis marking medieval decline) but rather as "an essentially new phase."[7] From the mid sixteenth to mid eighteenth centuries, he argued, the standoff between the Reformation and Counter-Reformation opened up space for the more religiously neutral policies of *raison d'état*, including, in the economic sphere, mercantilism, which proved transformatory and overwhelmingly beneficial for the Jews. In this context, Jews' commercial utility enabled them to win new freedoms and opportunities, not least of

[5] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676* (Princeton, 1973).

[6] To be sure, earlier scholars certainly emphasized positive elements within this overall negative picture – for example, Cecil Roth on the period of Jewish "Renaissance" in early modern Italy in *The Jews in the Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 1959); Dubnow on the crystallization of Jewish autonomous institutions and Talmudic learning in sixteenth-century Poland in *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from Earliest Times until the Present Day*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1916–20); Shmuel Ettinger on the seventeenth-century growth of religious toleration in "The Beginnings of the Change in the Attitude of European Society toward the Jews," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 7 (1961), 193–219; Selma Stern on the benefits (and dangers) brought about by the Court Jews phenomenon in *The Court Jew: A Contribution to the History of the Period of Absolutism in Central Europe* (Philadelphia, 1950).

[7] Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1989), 1.

all the opportunity to resettle in parts of western Europe from which they had been excluded for centuries. Indeed, Israel went as far as to describe the age as marking a kind of first Jewish emancipation, one applied to Jews as a collective, that preceded the later and better-known emancipation of the French Revolution era that granted rights to Jews, but as individuals alone.[8]

As noted, Israel's positive assessment marked a clear break with earlier, more "lachrymose" depictions. It highlighted the Jews' experience between 1650 and 1713 as reflecting "the most profound and pervasive impact on the west which they were ever to exert." Although the aftermath of this high water mark entailed a century of rapid decline – characterized by widespread economic dislocation and "creeping intellectual paralysis" – Israel's sweeping integrative depiction of early modern demographic transformation, autonomous Jewish self-rule, and above all interlocking semiglobal commercial networks, cast this formerly rather bleak period of Jewish history in a strikingly triumphant glow.

Though vastly influential, Israel's formulation did not meet with universal approval. As critics noted, its weak point lay in its characterization of Jewish internal cultural and intellectual developments, which Israel viewed largely as subordinate to broader European trends. In fact, disagreements over Israel's approach on this count reflected long-standing divisions among historians between focusing on the Jewish past from the vantage point of external shaping conditions, on the one hand, and immanent internal ones, on the other. Most crucially, the scholar David Ruderman, while appreciating Israel's pioneering effort to map the period's broad contours, endeavored to complicate his portrait by identifying the cultural dynamics or "formations" of the Jewish early modern: "the interconnections among intellectual creativity and the political, social, and technological conditions shaping Jewish life in this era."[9] Ruderman's specific insights can be found in the concluding chapter of this volume, among other places. Suffice it to mention here that his overarching project can broadly stand for (and builds upon) the work of a generation of scholars who came of age starting in the 1970s and 1980s, and who have collectively helped to transform our understanding of almost every aspect of Jewish history over the centuries from the Iberian expulsions to the development of Hasidism and Jewish Enlightenment. This scholarship includes, but is hardly confined to, the study of: the Sephardic diaspora after 1492 and its implications for the growth of a more expansive Jewish role in global trade; the imposition of ghettos, particularly in Italy, which, despite the

[8] Ibid., 3.
[9] David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Judaism, A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010), 11.

hardships they imposed, also opened up a tolerated Jewish space within Catholic civilization where Jews at times culturally flourished; a host of intellectual developments that were hardly medieval in character, such as Jewish engagement with Renaissance humanism and the associated proliferation of both Hebrew publishing and "Christian Hebraism"; the appearance of new religious mass movements connected with the dissemination of Kabbalah; and the first signs of the rise of more secular attitudes among rulers and states toward Jewish subjects, and even of a fledgling Jewish secularization itself.

This explosion of new scholarship on early modern Judaism is reflected in the college classroom as well. As late as the 1970s, an undergraduate course devoted to early modern Jewish history (however designated) would have been hard pressed to find relevant quality textbooks, certainly in English; today the instructor will find a great wealth of accessible materials, from primary source readers to contemporary memoir literature to specialized monographs and a handful of solid period surveys (as noted above). The synthetic works of Israel, Ruderman, and Dean Phillip Bell offer stimulating, coherent, and accessible guides to the period as a whole.[10] What is lacking, however, is a text that brings together both the depth and breadth of understanding that all of this recent scholarship has now made possible. It is our hope that this volume will satisfy precisely that need.

The shape of this volume reflects the broad consensus among current scholars that the early modern period is a meaningful unit of analysis in Jewish history. In some respects, it is fully appropriate to consider the period as one of transition, during which a range of phenomena broadly associated with "modernity" began, in varied ways, to impact upon Jewish lives: the rise of print culture; more complex commercial, financial, and production practices; increased migration flows; the growth of state power; and new forms of contestation of traditional orthodoxies and power structures. However, as almost all early modernists would also agree, change in this period was highly uneven and far from unidirectional, and the varied particularities of Jewish worlds from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries should be understood in their own diverse and locally contingent terms.

The chronological boundaries of the volume are therefore loose and flexible. 1500 is very much a soft opening date, inviting forays back into the late medieval period, but nonetheless signalling the rough start of various narratives that were important in Jewish as well as in "general" history (the rise of print; the European encounter with the New World; the denominational fracturing of Western Christendom), and also the key watershed

[10] Dean Phillip Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World* (Lanham, MD, 2008).

of Sephardic history in 1492. Our *terminus ad quem* of 1815 is less conventional. In Jewish history (as in European history), the modern period is often taken to begin with the French Revolution, if not slightly earlier.[11] This inaugural "era of emancipation" is thus yoked to the further advancement of the political inclusion of Jews later in the nineteenth century and the reactions against it, usually placed at the heart of the modern Jewish historical narrative. Yet this periodization entails certain distortions. It is not just the fact that, as a diaspora people, Jews were so dispersed geographically that no single watershed event reverberated in its effects to encompass all or most of them. It is also that modernity itself took different forms and developed at different times depending on the nature of the surrounding political culture and social structure. The major Jewish population centers, particularly in eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire, were at best only indirectly affected by the French Revolution of 1789. Polish Jewry – the most populous segment of the Jewish world – was impacted far more profoundly by the three partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, and 1795), though to the degree that these brought about disjuncture it was not necessarily or invariably in the direction of modernization. On the contrary, more recent depictions of eighteenth-century Jewry emphasize as much continuity as disjuncture. For Ottoman Jews, certainly, the modern era can in no sense be said to coincide with the European Enlightenment or the French Revolution, and properly only begins with the inauguration of the *Tanzimat* Reforms in 1839, which gradually eroded the traditional category of the tolerated alien, the *dhimmi*.

Jewish modernity has been variously measured by intellectual and spiritual developments – Italian Haskalah and Polish Hasidism in the eighteenth century, Russian Haskalah in the nineteenth – or by loose, unselfconsciously assimilative processes such as occurred for Anglo-Jewry starting in the early eighteenth century. In either case, broad efforts at periodization prove challenging.[12] As Michael Meyer dishearteningly concluded in his survey of different approaches to periodizing the modern age in Jewish life, "any endeavour to mark a borderline which will be

[11] For a classic statement of the various positions and their relative merits, see Michael Meyer, "Where Does Modern Jewish History Begin?" *Judaism* 23 (1975), 329–38.

[12] Among many others, see Isaac Barzilay, "The Italian and Berlin Haskalah (Parallels and Differences)," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 29 (1960–1), 17–54; Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford, 2014); Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004); Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas II and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia, 1983); Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia, 1974).

meaningful for all Jewries and embrace the origin or rise to normative status of all – or even most – of the characteristics of Jewish life as it presently exists seems . . . bound to fail."[13]

And yet, Meyer goes on to say, if for organizational purposes alone, one must begin (and in our case also conclude) somewhere. We feel that the best solution is to close our volume with the end of the Napoleonic wars. By including the years up to the Congress of Vienna in our "long" early modern period, an alternative vista is enabled, in which the upheavals of the revolutionary era can be more readily understood in relation to the centuries and decades that preceded it. Continuing the story up to 1815 disrupts any easy demarcation with the modern period of Jewish history. It also brings into somewhat greater synchronicity the very different trajectories occurring in western, central and eastern Europe, as a result above all of the Napoleonic conquests, which helped extend modern trends regarding Jews (or at least debates about such trends) not just throughout Europe but also as far as the Ottoman world, where two decades after Napoleon's fall a period of fundamental internal reform would begin.

The volume aims to offer an up-to-date and commanding survey of the field of early modern Jewish history, which has grown immensely since the late 1990s. The history of Judaism is necessarily also the history of the Jews: although religion will figure prominently, many chapters will approach the Jewish past from perspectives that emphasize social and political over religious developments. And the history of the Jews is necessarily also the history of the interactions of Jews with others, and so these interactions will be central to much of the volume. Some contributors are primarily affiliated with Jewish studies, while others are thematic specialists for whom Jews are not necessarily their primary expertise. Most contributors are historians, but this is an interdisciplinary volume, including contributions from scholars of religious studies, literary studies, art history, and material culture. We have consciously solicited contributions from North America, Israel, and Europe, in order to ensure that the volume captures current scholarly thinking from these three different regions, each of which tends to generate a somewhat different perspective on the Jewish past. We present, we hope, an authoritative history, but also one that reflects the diversity and internal debate that characterizes this vibrant field.

How should the history of early modern Jewry be organized? Much of the historiography of the field takes the national or linguistic boundaries of the modern period as its primary demarcating logic. This is in part due to the nation-state-oriented structures that have governed and dominated the study of the Jewish past since the late nineteenth

[13] Meyer, "Where Does Modern Jewish History Begin?" 336.

century, promoting the narration of French, German, Italian, American, and other state-shaped Jewish histories. While for certain purposes these divisions make adequate sense, the key differences across the Jewish world – most notably the distinctions among Sephardic, Ashkenazic, and other cultural realms – do not align with the political map of the early modern world, and indeed, Jewish communities in this period cannot be neatly geographically separated from one another. A more refined periodization also poses difficulties, as rhythms of continuity and change of course varied between areas of Jewish settlement. For some topics, it is useful to mark a separation between the earlier half of the period, up to approximately 1650, and the "long Enlightenment" period in Europe from roughly 1650 onwards. The former period is characterized by the impact of the Renaissance, the emergence of Christian inter-confessional competition and conflict, and the policies of so-called mercantile philosemitism, through which small numbers of Jews were encouraged to resettle some territories in western and central Europe (from which they had long been excluded), in order to fructify commercial life. The latter, in contrast, covers a period when new ideas increasingly fed into scientific and political thought, global interconnections grew more prominent in economic life, Jewish settlement spread farther into important new areas (notably Britain and North America), and, in the wake of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the modern state system, so impactful on the future life of Jews, began to take shape. However, it is important also to highlight cultural continuities and connections across the 315 years covered by this volume, and across the breadth of the expanding Jewish world.

We have therefore divided the volume into three broad sections, while allowing for a blurring of the boundaries between them. In the first section, six ambitious chapters together offer a survey of the key features of European and Mediterranean Jewry in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The first three chapters cover the attitudes and policies toward Jews and Judaism in each of three main religious spheres in which they lived: Catholicism, in the late Renaissance and Catholic Reform eras; Protestantism, in its formative period through to the end of the Thirty Years' War; and Islam, during the dramatic rise of Ottoman Jewry from 1492 through to the late sixteenth century. The next three chapters each cover a key aspect of the framework of Jewish existence in this period: the varied and changing legal and political status of Jewish settlements; the place of Jews in the European and intercontinental economy; and the institutional structures and practices of Jewish communities in the transition from the medieval to the early modern period. Taken together, the chapters in this

section provide a broad but thorough overview of Jewish life across Europe and the Mediterranean basin in the first half of the early modern period.

The chapters in the second and longest section of the volume are thematically more tightly focused, but are often more chronologically ambitious, in many cases covering the full period covered by the volume, from the end of the fifteenth to the outset of the nineteenth century. The aim of this section is to cover as wide a range as possible of the historical processes shaping early modern Jewish life. Chapters are comparative across time and space when appropriate, but offer focused attention on key episodes in the period (such as the Sabbatean irruption) and on major centers of population (such as eastern Europe). Religious, cultural, intellectual, economic, and political topics are given equal priority, and often overlap with one another, with some chapters approaching related topics from different disciplinary or interpretive perspectives.

The first two chapters of this section both stretch back into the pre-1500 period in order to analyze and explain key particularities of the two European Jewish cultural domains: first, the impact of the Iberian inquisitions on Sephardic Jewry and on the development of "New Christian" identities; and second, the cultural and institutional flourishing of Jewish life in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth from the early sixteenth century onward. Two contributions then trace the linguistic transformations, across the early modern period, of the distinctive tongues of these two domains: Ladino and Yiddish. The next two chapters both focus on the transformations wrought by the advent of printing: in the development of Jewish book culture through to the early nineteenth century, and in the study of Jewish texts by early modern Christians. Three chapters then look at a range of aspects of the structures of religious authority in early modern Jewry: rabbinic culture and the development of religious law, or Halakhah; the particular challenges to communal authority across the Western Sephardic Diaspora, from Hamburg to the Caribbean; and the development of Jewish institutions and practices of education and of rabbinical homiletics. The next cluster of chapters explores various dimensions of Jewish mysticism in this period: the development of the Kabbalah across the early modern Jewish world; the place of magic and mysticism in Jewish popular beliefs and practices; and the particular case of the Sabbatean movement of the 1660s, and its afterlife. This is followed by a chapter on early modern Jewish scientific, medical, and philosophical thought. A pair of essays then focus on Jewish economic history, the first surveying the relatively recent historiographical concept of the early modern "port Jew," and the second analyzing the particular role of Jews in the economy of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The next four chapters approach early modern Jewish religious life from a range of perspectives. Staying in eastern

Europe, the first of these looks at Jewish practices of piety and devotion in this region across the early modern period, while the next offers an interpretive account of the eighteenth-century rise of Hasidism. The emergence, at roughly the same time, of the Haskalah, or "Jewish Enlightenment," is the subject of the next chapter, which is followed by a more social-historical exploration of the popular religious world of early modern Jewry, with an emphasis on Italy but ranging comparatively across the continent. The final two essays of the section look at the visual arts and at music, broadening out the range of Jewish cultural experience and expression addressed in this volume.

The final section of the volume covers the period from the middle of the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century. It is in this section alone that chapters are primarily organized geographically, and are often focused on particular states – in recognition of the fact that in the latter part of the early modern period state policies toward Jews became an increasingly significant focus of debate, while national affiliations became an ever more significant component of Jewish identities. The section starts with German Jewry, and then moves on to the cognate, if still more heterogeneous, Jewries under Habsburg rule, including the small but growing community of Jews in the Kingdom of Hungary. We next turn to the Ashkenazic demographic heartland of Poland–Lithuania. Ottoman Jewry in the later early modern period was also demographically substantial (although by this time declining) and certainly of enormous cultural vitality, as the subsequent chapter covering Ottoman Jewry at this time makes clear. Like Germany, Italy – the subject of the next chapter – was also a region of multiple polities and numerous scattered Jewish communities, many with a continuous history through the early modern and modern periods, despite not infrequent local expulsions. In contrast, the Jewries of the Netherlands, France, and Great Britain – to each of which a chapter is dedicated – were effectively reconstituted in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, developing in parallel despite the important differences in the status, economic activity, and cultural characteristics of these Jewish communities.

The volume then moves beyond Europe, with two chapters on the Jewries of the New World, the first on the Caribbean in the context of the wider Atlantic world, and the second on the early Jewish settlement of North America. A synoptic chapter then covers the various Jewries of Ethiopia and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in Yemen and India; a separate short chapter is devoted to the Jews of Iran. Two comparative chapters round out the section and bring the volume to its close. The first explores the intellectual, political, social, and economic origins in this period of what came to be known retrospectively as "Jewish Emancipation"; the second

looks back at the entire early modern period from the vantage point of the early nineteenth century, and offers a reflective reconsideration of the periodization of "modernity" in Jewish history.

As with any text of this scale, individual readers will use this volume in different ways, and we hope that most will find it serves a variety of purposes. The volume is designed equally as a work of reference, a high-level gateway into multiple fields of specialism, an overview of the interconnections between different topics, and a tool and stimulus for further research. It is also a polyphonic interpretive summary of the current state of knowledge in the interdisciplinary field of early modern Jewish studies. Our mapping of the field is no doubt too vast to be readily taken in as a whole. A very different but equally valid map could also certainly have been produced. As editors we cannot claim to present anything like a comprehensive survey, but we hope that our forty-odd contributions reflect the current breadth, diversity, and dynamism of this exciting area of study. Some of the volume's lacunae perhaps also reflect the current areas of weakness in the field – though different readers will of course identify and diagnose these differently. Despite undoubted imperfections, we hope we have succeeded in our aim of producing an unprecedentedly rich and detailed exploration of the textual, economic, political, cultural, and social history of the Jews from the start of the sixteenth century to the end of the Napoleonic era, and of the interweaving of these histories in the wider transformations of the early modern world.

PART I

THE WORLD OF EARLY MODERN JEWRY, *c.* 1500–1650

CHAPTER 1

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE JEWS

KENNETH STOW

In the early sixteenth century, the former Augustinian monk Martin Luther successfully challenged the monopoly on Christian religious truth previously held by the Catholic Church. The resulting schism split Europe in two, and the wounds the schism inflicted, by accusation, repressive activities, and especially protracted war, would take centuries to heal; some say they have never fully healed. The Jews of Europe were not left untouched. The small number of Jews who resided in Protestant territories, principally in German lands, had difficulty comprehending the novel situation, and were also forced to endure attitudes and policies that varied between paternalistic tolerance and Luther's eventually grand hostility. Jews living in Europe's Catholic regions endured a more unified fate, yet one that was ultimately more threatening than the Protestant experience. The majority of these Jews, again not a large number, dwelled in Italy. The Jews of Catholic Poland began their rapid demographic expansion only from about 1500, and their lives would be governed principally by the directives of the Polish nobility, regardless of ecclesiastical badgering. The decisions of the Church fell hardest on the Jews living in Italy, who would be forced, one community after another, to live in a ghetto, which was then a new institution, and to endure a sustained conversionary pressure originating in the papacy itself. This pressure was of a kind hitherto unknown and untried.

Yet the roots of this turn were not a direct outgrowth of the Protestant revolt, which may have hastened their development. Rather, they were planted beforehand, and their immediate stimulus is to be sought in a combination of factors: first, a rapidly escalating fear of Jews, however unfounded in reality; second, the proliferation of this fear in learned circles, most particularly those of humanists and legal scholars, often of a humanist bent themselves; and, third, a simmering, and sometimes open, messianism, which said that the time for the Jews' conversion – predicted by St. Paul himself as auguring or even bringing in its wake the end of days – was at hand. The force of these three increased and began to be felt ever more

palpably during the course of the fifteenth century. In that time, the Catholic Church entered into a triple crisis in its relations with the Jews.

This complex, three-phased, crisis, which was never resolved, and which led to ever escalating frictions, opened with the concerted attempt of (anti-) Pope Benedict XIII, between 1413 and 1418, to convert masses of Spanish Jews to Christianity.[1] Unlike previous popes, who had sporadically welcomed and encouraged conversion, Benedict made it the center of his policy. And although the popes who followed him allowed this policy to lapse, its memory remained, to have life breathed back into it about 1513. From this time, conversion, followed in 1555 by segregation – both to encourage conversion and to isolate those already baptized (which, too, was part of Benedict's policy) – would dominate papal Jewry policies.[2] This was especially true in Italy.[3]

A second phase of the crisis dates to 1475. Jews in the northern Italian city of Trent (then a part of the Empire) were charged with killing a child, Simon, draining his blood, and using it in their rituals. Not the first charge of its kind, this one differed. Its *dramatis personae* included high churchmen, members of the papal curia, and humanists. A papal legate and the pope himself, Sixtus IV, also became involved, both decrying the charge, albeit indirectly. Other popes, too, had protested against ritual murder accusations, but, in doing so, no pope before Sixtus had to take into account political dealings in his own court, especially by humanists such as Bartolomeo Platina, the founder of the Vatican Library. One might have imagined that Renaissance humanists, with their classical and critical learning, would have had a better grasp of reality than medieval scholastic predecessors. Yet humanists applauded the Trentine charge, which ended in the judicial murder of all the Jewish males in the city and the effectively forced baptism of their wives and children.

Members of what we might presume was an enlightened intelligentsia had come to perceive the Jewish presence as a danger; Jews were evil, miscreants, and polluters of social and religious purity. They were also seen

[1] On Benedict, see Kenneth Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy, 1555–1593* (New York, 1977), ch. 12.

[2] See David Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain," *Past and Present* 174 (2002), 3–41, esp. 4–9, where he discusses the problems created in Spain by not knowing who was a true convert and segregationist reaction. See, too, Kenneth Stow, "Conversion, Apostasy, and Apprehensiveness: Emicho of Flonheim and the Fear of Jews in the Twelfth Century," *Speculum* 76 (2001), 911–33, for similar problems in 1096.

[3] There were scattered, but precarious, communities in Germany, while the Jewish population of eastern Europe only began its growth at this time. See Michael Toch, *Peasants and Jews in Medieval Germany* (Aldershot, 2003).

as ever ready to act out their hatreds. Contrastingly, and paradoxically, the pope and his legate who defended the Jews were mendicants, friars, some of whose predecessors had caused the Jews great travail, while others, contemporary Franciscans, in particular, were then busily raising havoc about Jewish moneylending. This jumbled cast of characters emphasizes how significantly times were changing for the Jews. Their humanist opponents fundamentally wanted them "to go away," sometimes attributing them with magical prowess and the darkest of desires. Simple and simplifying notions, like that of the Jews as "Christ killers," were a minor concern. The sticking point was the humanist view of Christian society as a *societas fidei*, a society of faith and the faithful, the embodiment of the *Corpus Christi*, which was to be at once the *corpus ecclesiae mysticum*, the mystical body of the Church and its members, and the sanctified political body of cities and towns. Humanists joined hands, too, with centuries of Christian thinkers who had said, whether directly or by allusion, that Jewish touch was contaminating, defiling those who accepted the Eucharist, and vitiated the sacrament's effects. Though theologically impossible, that touch was no doubt also thought to threaten the integrity of the sacrament itself. Likewise, Jewish economic activity was said, extending the image of the *Corpus Christi*, to drain the metaphoric blood of the town embodied by money, infecting civic members with "gangrene" and choking off economic development.[4]

That which principally animated the humanists, therefore, was the desire to neutralize imagined Jewish aggression. The tool they chose to perform this task was legal reformulation, or at least the law's reinterpretation and application. These reformulations would precipitate the third phase of the crisis. And if not every legist, jurist, or lawyer joined the fray, those who did acted mercilessly, notably at Trent, where the papal legate, the Dominican Bishop de Giudice, deemed the trial of the accused – run, as was said, by humanists – perverse. Parallel to Trent, humanist legists like Alexander de Nievo were seeking to overturn the traditional papal acceptance of Jewish lending. So many small Italian communities were founded around a central lender (very few such lenders were really wealthy); to declare lending illegal was to attack a town's very Jewish presence.

Special threats came from people like the humanist legist Ulrich Zasius, who lived about the turn of the sixteenth century. Zasius was part of a revisionist movement in legal study, which derided the medieval tradition of interpreting Roman law as though it were a contemporary product, in disregard of its ancient origins. Rather, Roman law was to be understood in what humanist legists said was its original context, which also happened to

[4] Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs: An Image and Its Interpreters* (Stanford, 2006).

be one of severe Jewish restriction; this was contrary to the opinion of many medieval interpreters, such as the towering Bartolus of Saxoferrato, who allowed Jewish exceptions time after time. Humanists, moreover, were reading Roman law alongside other ancient texts that sometimes attributed religious and racial murder to Jews, egging on humanist legists all the more to challenge the Jews' legal status quo.[5]

Zasius laid down the gauntlet by rejecting the long-standing majority opinion that, as *cives* ("citizens") – as Roman law / *ius commune* classified them – Jews enjoyed parental rights (*patria potestas*) over their children. Jews lack these rights, said Zasius, because they are *servi* ("true slaves"), subject to princes in all matters, including the baptism of their children regardless of their parental will (*invitis parentibus*).[6] For the benefit of the faith, the authorities had full power to act *in loco parentis*, a concept known to all that should conjure up the image of the modern state, which claims the right legally to determine the custody of children – which, indeed, was the crux of Zasius's threat. When ecclesiastical officials began selectively to exploit his thinking from about the middle of the seventeenth century, they used it to justify what amounted to kidnappings and the subsequent forced baptism of Jewish children, whose parents were left with little choice but to mourn their offspring's fate.[7] The legist and judge of the Jews in Piedmont, Giuseppe Sessa, writing in 1716, would even say that the state has a prior right to protect its needs over those of the parents, and those needs included the proper religion of subjects.[8]

This was far different from what had transpired in the medieval world, or certainly the one of the medieval Church. That Church had reached a *modus vivendi* with Jews. It had pressed them, restricted them, even – on occasion – attacked Jewish literature, and it had come down hard after the thirteenth century on Jews who dissuaded others from converting to Christianity or who had lured converts back. It had even required Jews to mark their clothing, so that Christians would be wary of untoward relations, or close contacts, which would make the latter ritually unfit when

[5] See Carlo Ginzburg, *Storia notturna, una decifrazione del sabba* (Turin, 2008), 10.

[6] See Uldarici Zasii, *Libellus de Iudaeis, Quaestiones III* (1559), 173; and as analyzed by Stevan Rowan, "Ulrich Zasius and the Baptism of Jewish Children," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 6, 2 (1975), 3–25.

[7] See the detailed examination of the idea of transferring power from a wayward parent to the Church, permitting effectively forced baptism, in Laura Luzi, "'Inviti non sunt baptizandi': la dinamica delle conversioni degli ebrei," *Mediterranea. Richerche storiche* 4 (2007), 249–52.

[8] Giuseppe Sessa, *Tractatus de Iudaeis* (Turin, 1716), 207ff. Sessa said these things, but he was not really at peace with them, saying that what was legal was neither obligatory nor always advisable.

they took communion, once a year, at Easter; this was a doctrine of impurity through contact, much like the Jewish rules of "family purity" that govern contact with the menstruate woman. Nonetheless, the Church had done all this with an eye to its traditional law and theology, both of which made room for Jews, which, in turn, created a need for an equilibrium balancing limitation and privilege.

Jews, although it has wrongly been said otherwise, were *not* heretics, nor was Judaism itself ever declared heretical. Jews, rather, were religious–theological "outsiders" (*de foris sunt*), in a class of their own, who also had a place in St. Paul's soteriology. In his vision of the end of days, Paul foresaw the Jews' mass conversion; indeed, their conversion would signal that time's arrival. Nonetheless, however much the Jews' absorption into the mystical body of the Church was desired – that which St. Paul called *unus panis, multi sumus* ("we are one [seamless] loaf, regardless of how many we are") – their conversion had become central only during short spurts of missionary energy like that under Benedict XIII.

But from the end of the fifteenth century and especially from the second decade of the sixteenth, conversion took on a new hue. In the Middle Ages, a convert became a member of the religious (and all-encompassing social) body of the Church. Non-Christians, namely, Jews, could exist outside this social body spiritually, yet possessed of a special civil, or political, status. However, from the early modern period, this duality was stymied. Political and religious unity in the civic body came to be viewed as one, and interchangeable. The decree expelling Jews from Spain in 1492 notably argued that a Jewish presence was detrimental to the well-being of the *res publica* – the emphasis being on civil, as much as religious, identity. Jewish life might similarly be truncated in the German states, which were anxious to become purely Protestant or Catholic confessional *political* entities. As civic and religious goals fused, religious conversion became ever more desired by the Christian authorities.

To be sure, unity could be pursued through an opposite route, without conversion. If the *state itself* secularized, "deconfessionalized," then Jews could be absorbed politically as Jews. The *corpus reipublicae mysticum* (the state's mystical, or spiritual, body, as French kings had referred to their kingdom even in the Middle Ages) might become the *corpus reipublicae saecularem*, the secular (political) body of the state, with the ideology of unity based on faith, as espoused by the *corpus ecclesiae mysticum* of the Church, replaced by unity based on legal uniformity in the now civil political body. All citizens would be equal, both in status and before the law. This was the process that took place in western Europe – and, to be sure, in the new United States – whose most vivid culmination was in the events of 1791, when, during the Revolution, French Jews were confirmed

as equal citizens, although at the cost of ceding long-standing communal privilege. The process climaxed in 1804, when Napoleon issued the *Code civil*, which eliminated the confessional biases in previous legal systems.[9] However, the writing had long been on the wall. Even before the Revolution, the old French regime, in the name of legal uniformity, was pushing itself into matters of Jewish inheritance and marriage, as changes in Jewish behavior in Alsace are now being shown to illustrate.[10]

Such a process could not have even begun in the "confessionalized" Papal States of the Church. Like Germany (the Empire) or Spain, the Papal State, too, would seek out a "confessionalized" unity. But whereas the former did so through expulsions and sometimes violence, the Papal State would take its cue from all three phases of the crisis described above. Without wholly abandoning its theological and canonical traditions of toleration, the Papal State would embark on a path that fused civil with religious integration. A similar path was suggested by jurists in the Empire, but only in the Papal States was it actually followed. The goal, as expressed by Marquardus de Susannis in 1558, was simple. "Natural birth [as a citizen]," he said, "and religious regeneration [conversion] were the same [with respect to achieving full civic rights and status]."[11] Hence, civic homogeneity required conversion – which de Susannis's comprehensive legal treatise *De iudaeis et aliis infidelibus* (of 1558; there were five subsequent editions) did everything to promote. Indeed, de Susannis had set out to support recently instituted papal policies. These combined the "discipline" (the term historians now apply to describe Counter-Reformation policies of control in general) said necessary to blunt alleged Jewish aggressiveness with strategies of legal pressure like those set forth by Ulrich Zasius in the hope of achieving large-scale conversion. In particular, Jews were to be controlled by being forced to live as exclusively as possible by the tenets of *ius commune*, while they were pushed ever farther away from using their own Jewish law (Halakhah) to govern internal affairs. The new policy was also constant. From its inception, and for 300 subsequent years, it never flagged.

This policy began officially in 1555. In that year, prompted by the words of tracts and essays dating from the later fifteenth century, and perhaps directly by the precedents of Benedict XIII, Pope Paul IV established the

[9] See R. C. van Caenegem, *An Historical Introduction to Private Law* (Cambridge, 1988).

[10] Jay Berkowitz, "Social and religious controls in pre-revolutionary France: rethinking the beginnings of modernity," *Jewish History* 15 (2001), 1–40. More recently, Jay Berkovitz, *Protocols of Justice: The Pinkas of the Metz Rabbinic Court 1771–1789* (Leiden, 2014).

[11] All unattributed translations in this volume are the work of the author of the relevant chapter.

Roman ghetto.[12] This quarantined area was intended originally as a kind of limbo, a holding place for Jews, first, to prevent pollution from what was deemed excessive contact with Christians, but even more, to persuade Jews that conversion – the heart of the new policy – was in their best interest. The ghetto's true nature, however, both religiously and socially, was most clearly stated only in 1871, a year after it was dismantled. Observing Jews now moving about the city freely, Pope Pius IX remarked that Jews "were barking up and down Rome's streets" (going *per le vie latrare*), and, presumably, befouling these streets with their droppings as well. The ghetto was a kennel; its residents, so long as they refused to shed their unwelcome Jewish identity, foul "dogs."

This image was anything but new. The perception of the Jew as a polluting dog, booted out of God's grace in favor of the Christians, had first been expressed – in just so many words – by the later-fourth-century John Chrysostom.[13] Indeed, the image's long life and its unflagging portent of Jewish endangerment of seamless Christian purity direct us to gaze backward. To understand the roots of the crisis we have outlined and the new program of conversion, unity, and ghettoization that came into being in the sixteenth century, we must look briefly into the fundamentals of traditional Church policy. These were complex. Relations between the Church and the Jews were not, as they are so regularly – and conveniently – presented, simply those of a greater force pressing on a lesser one. Nor will it suffice to say that there were periods of so-called good relations, times of "favorable popes," followed by those of "bad" or "harsh" popes and oppression; what determined policies was not personal whim. So, too – the following point cannot be sufficiently emphasized – Jewish and Christian coexistence did not rest on the citation of a single biblical verse by Augustine of Hippo (d. 435), as though it, of itself – and *by* itself – had the power to determine the totality of the medieval Jewish fate.[14] Among other things, and despite what is commonly believed regarding this verse's *supposedly* frequent invocation, one of the first – and certainly the first pope – to cite Augustine directly after Augustine's own time was Pope Innocent III in the early thirteenth century.[15]

[12] Stow, *Catholic Thought*, ch. 1.

[13] Like John Chrysostom, Pius IX, too, had in mind the Eucharist when he spoke of Rome's Jews "barking in the streets." Even today, the "Jewish dog" persists in a Chilean children's rhyme: "Who has stolen the bread from the oven?" The refrain is: "The Jewish dogs." This is a host libel, which also conjures up the story of the murderous Jewish father.

[14] Recently restated in Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, 1999).

[15] Stow, *Jewish Dogs*, 225 n. 111.

Augustine's real approach to Jews was a ferocious one, modeled after some of the sharpest elements in Pauline thought. Jews were carnal, representing all ills, as opposed to spiritual Christians and Christianity.[16] One shunned them. Paul had spoken of the "little leaven that sours the whole lump of dough." Judaizing, as practiced by *early Christians*, Paul said, embodied evil and destroyed Christian purity, a figure that would return almost literally in the writings of Thomas of Aquinas over 800 years later. Like many of his contemporaries, however, Thomas would refer not to (Christian) Judaizers but to the behavior of Jews themselves. *Their* Judaism and its practice bespoke the absence of reason, that signifier of humanity, which in turn was signaled by faith in Christ: Jews were evil, unreasoning, and inhuman. It was in this spirit that Augustine attacked Jews; his reference to the mark of Cain, which he said Jews bore, was to Judaism itself.

Yet pulling back at the last moment in his tract *Against the Jews*, really a sermon on good and evil, Augustine wrote that Jews were to be approached, hoping for their conversion, through the sweetness of lips, not violence. Here, too, Augustine was echoing Paul, this time the Paul of the Epistle to the Romans, who was qualifying his fears of "Judaizing" in (the earlier) Galatians and Corinthians, saying that the Jews' acceptance of Christianity would mark the advent of the Second Coming. The Jews were a necessary, indispensable element of society and salvation. Augustine, who otherwise called the Jews the *capsarii*, the older slaves who carried the books (as testimony) for the younger Christian masters, a figure he used ubiquitously, would not deviate from this fundamental Pauline teaching, nor would almost anybody else. Jews could not be dispensed with – however much they were *not* members of the "one bread," the unique body of the faithful, fused together through the Eucharist, for which Paul so yearned (I Cor. 10:16–18). Augustine was also guided by Roman law, the laws issued by Emperors Theodosian and Justinian, laws which were crystal clear: though theirs was a second-class and restricted status, because of their religion, Jews nonetheless were citizens (*cives*), never to be harmed *on account of* their religion (this is said in just so many words) and also privileged to enjoy the benefits of Roman *civil* law.[17]

It was this concept of law and limited citizenship that informed (if it did not always determine in fact) the real relations of Jews with their medieval rulers, certainly their ecclesiastical ones (relations with secular rulers were

[16] On the continuity of perceptions of Jewish carnality opposed to Christian spirituality, see, now, David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism, the Western Tradition* (New York, 2013).

[17] Code of Justinian, bk. 1, title 9, law 8, and *passim*, in Theodor Mommsen and Paul Krueger, eds., *Corpus iuris civilis* (Berlin, 1906).

more complex, but that is not our subject here). This concept, of course, was flawed. Bartolus of Saxoferrato cut to the quick. All citizens, he said – with no reference to Christianity – should be equal, whether natural-born or naturalized.[18] However, Bartolus's concept of citizenship was one few *could* articulate, let alone apply, until the end of the eighteenth century. In 1558, as we just saw, Marquardus de Susannis was explicit: without being Christians, Jews did not – could not – have full rights.

Still, Pope Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century understood that one could not say Jews enjoyed the rule of Roman law without according them fundamental privileges. We do not know precisely who was reading Gregory's words, which would be cited directly again only 350 years after his death, but it is clear that thinkers and lawyers through the end of the eleventh century grasped that it was necessary to balance law and restriction. Following the ambivalence in Paul and Roman law, if not in Gregory the Great as well, and perhaps (although nobody was citing him) Augustine, they made it clear that although Jews were to be kept from intimacy with Christians, lest the Eucharist be corrupted, they were also to be treated fairly, as the law demanded. Jews were even said to bear the figure of God. This view was not the unanimous one. Nor was restraint from violence a universal fact, which included (rare) bouts of forced conversion, against which Pope Alexander II spoke out in 1062, pointing to the Jews' quiet acceptance of Christian rule. Yet for the most part, both sides agreed to live in peace.

The First Crusade of 1096 brought with it important change. The cause was not the pillage and intense slaughter in the communities of the Rhineland in that year; the communities eventually revived. What worried churchmen was that, during the assaults, although many Jews had converted – some through force, others out of fear or resignation – most appear to have returned quickly to Judaism, aided often by secular authorities over the protest of ecclesiastical leaders. But was not baptism indelible, and, by canonical standards, were these returnees not in fact apostates and heretics? Others never returned, but practiced Judaism in secret. These last, in particular, threatened Eucharistic purity, and it was just at this time that the Eucharistic doctrine was being perfected. Fear of Jews corrupting the Eucharist was a prime motive when Innocent III ordered Jews in 1215 – the same year the Eucharist became universally obligatory – to avoid intimacies by wearing special clothing. Intimacies and corruption of the sacrament were considered synonymous.[19]

[18] See Julius Kirshner, "*Civitas sibi faciat civem*: Bartolus of Sassoferrato's Doctrine on the Making of a Citizen," *Speculum* 48 (1973), 694–713.

[19] See the literature cited in nn. 1, 2, and 4.

A web of suspicion was growing, which also found outlet in new charges. One was against Jewish literature: that it perverted the Judaism the Church tolerated, or was, at least, blasphemous. More threatening was the charge, first heard about the mid twelfth century, that Jews were killing Christian children, which morphed, about seventy-five years later, into charges Jews were using the blood of these children, patent surrogates for Christ, for ritual and similar magical purposes. The capstone was the coupling of the Christ-imagery in these charges with that of transubstantiation as it occurred in the Eucharistic wafer, which latter Jews were also said to attack.[20] This was a highly potent brew. It condemned Jews for doing that which, in fact, people really wanted them to do – namely, to create new martyrs. Nonetheless, it also unleashed attacks and certainly helped persuade the kings of England, in 1290, and France, in 1306, who had expressed their unhesitating belief in all these charges, to expel their Jewish subjects.

No less important, these charges were both anticipated and then reinforced in the tale, originating in Europe no later than the sixth century (and perhaps earlier in the Greek-speaking East), that a Jewish father threw his son into an oven upon hearing that the son wished either to taste the Eucharist or to become a Christian. The same accusation recurred during the Crusades and in seventeenth-century Rome, but it was made generically, with no named murderer or victim. Ultimately, in Prague, in 1694, a direct charge was made, with dire consequences, against the father of one Shimon Abeles.[21] Italian jurists, like Giuseppe Sessa, repeated this specific charge to justify why pregnant Jewish mothers, whose future child had been "offered" to the Church (a term to be revisited below), should be sequestered in a House of Converts until they gave birth, and their child immediately baptized.[22]

[20] In the exemplary tale of the Good Werner (later fourteenth century), the victim is identified as – at once, and interchangeably – the Church, Christ, and the Eucharist, whose martyrdom was called necessary to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice. On Werner and associated literature, see Stow, *Jewish Dogs*, 61–4.

[21] See Elisheva Carlebach, "The Death of Shimon Abeles: Jewish–Christian Tension in Seventeenth-Century Prague," Berman Lecture, Queens College New York, 2003; and for the motif in abstract, see Lisa Lampert, "The Once and Future Jew: The Croxton Play of the Sacrament, Little Robert of Bury and Historical Memory," *Jewish History* 15 (2001), 235–55. See also Kenneth Stow, "Jews and Christians, Two Different Cultures," in Uwe Israel, Robert Juette, and Reinhold Mueller, eds., *Interstizi: Culture Ebraico-Cristiane a Venezia e nei suoi domini tra basso medieovo e prima epoca moderna* (Rome, 2010); and "The Cruel Jewish Father: From Miracle to Murder," in David Engel, Lawrence Schiffmann, and Elliot R. Wolfson, eds., *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan* (Leiden, 2012), 245–78.

[22] See Sessa, *Tractatus de Iudaeis*, 207 and 225.

The papacy held back, openly rejecting ritual murder accusations. It, together with lawyers and theologians, could never abandon Pauline teachings. Even the Dominican Ramon Martí (Raymundus Martinus) stopped short. His *Pugio fidei* (1278), an extraordinary collection of apparently true midrashic texts presented in Hebrew alongside a Latin translation and commentary, impugns the Judaism of his day as the fruit of the Devil.[23] Nevertheless, he awaits the Jews' conversion only at the end of days, calling them a prickly fruit that eventually will offer a sweet taste. Dominican inquisitors, too, like the fourteenth-century Nicholas Eymeric, wrote in his manual that there were limits. Jews professing Judaism and not denying God's existence were beyond the Inquisition's remit.[24] In a similar vein, a Franciscan appeal to force Jews to attend sermons was answered coolly by Pope Nicholas III, in 1278, who allowed the friars to summon Jews, but left no doubt that he intended to order no punishments for Jews who refused to attend.

Jews could have viewed none of this calmly. One way or another, they were constantly being challenged. One Jewish author wrote – in Hebrew, to be sure – that the pope was a safe refuge: he was consistent in observing the law, as opposed to always-arbitrary kings. Another lampooned kings and bishops, into whose mouths were put words of praise and guarantees of protection, none of which they intended to implement. What is more, Jews understood Christian culture intimately. The first of these two Jewish writers even borrowed, and inverted, symbolism found in stories of the Grail – in particular, "The Quest of the Grail" from 1220. In 1354, Jews in Barcelona appealed to King Pere IV, asking him to petition the pope to ensure that the papal inquisitors observed proper limits.[25]

Jewish intellectuals, who also challenged Christian doctrine, had to have understood how intense were the forces, which, in their anxiety, were militating for the elimination of both Jews and Judaism. The fifteenth-century Italian Franciscan Giovanni di Capistrano bitterly refuted an argument that Jews be allowed to sell the non-kosher hindquarters of slaughtered animals to Christians; Christians, he said, would be inferior if this happened, and polluted through Judaization.[26] Another Franciscan,

[23] Raymundus Martinus, *Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos,* ed. J. B. Carpzov (Leipzig, 1687). And see Robert Bonfil, "The Nature of Judaism in Raymundus Martini's Pugio Fidei" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 40 (1971), 360–75.

[24] This was the medieval Papal Inquisition, a distinct institution, which is not to be confused with the later Spanish National Inquisition dedicated to pursuing Judaizing *conversos.*

[25] Stow, *Jewish Dogs*, 258.

[26] Helène Angiolini, "'Cibus iudei': un 'consilium' quasi inedito di Angelo di Castro sulla macellazione con rito ebraico e una 'reprobatio' di san Giovanni da Capestrano," in

Fortunato de Coppoli, called Jewish moneylenders dogs sucking out the (economic) blood of the town.[27]

Yet, in all of this, there was the law, whose effects were even more potent than Pauline teachings. In the heat of his conversionary thrusts, Benedict XIII insisted – however cynically – in the bull *Etsi doctoris gentium*, that the laws guaranteeing Jewish privilege be observed, even if, in reality, Benedict was practically forcing Jews to the baptismal font. Cynicism mixed with sincerity. Even Paul IV, the founder of the Roman ghetto in 1555, who hoped to use legal pressure to force Jews to convert, insisted on legal observance. In the mid eighteenth century, the ecclesiastical judge Lucio de Ferraris asked whether it might ever be licit to expel the Jews and, having reviewed all the possibilities, said no. Had not the popes, he explained, limited themselves by the law, calling for "correction" alone, even when Jews (as he saw it) were guilty of the worst crimes against the faith. Two centuries earlier, even Marquardus de Susannis had conceded that Jews possessed rights, principally the right to exist and even to use Jewish law when it did not contradict the law of the land or the canons. The same theme, with reservations, was being played in 1716 by Giuseppe Sessa. Sessa, nonetheless, was living on the cusp of another world, as we shall soon see. We must question, too, the motives of Lucio Ferraris. Was he perhaps doubting the policy of "legalized kidnapping" as a prelude to baptism, which, as we shall see, was then at its height?

During the three centuries preceding Sessa, however, the heritage of legal fidelity had become as troublesome as it had previously been potentially helpful. This was largely because, during these centuries, the notion that Jews, Jewish practice, and Judaism had to disappear gained momentum. And if Pauline and legal strictures had once prevented this eventuality, both were now, paradoxically, being exploited by church officials and canon lawyers who sought out and actually found a way to make the two threads of preserving Jews and seeking their elimination improbably compatible. This was accomplished by elaborating thinking like that most typified by Ulrich Zasius – and continued in the eighteenth century by lawyers like Giovanni Riganti – about Jewish submission, the loss of "parental power," and the ending of all forms of Jewish self-governance, while, at the same time, binding the Jews – as did Rome's highest court, the Rota, in 1621 – ever more tightly to *ius commune*'s often inimical rules. Jews, said the canonist Antonio Ricciullo in 1622, in his *Tractatus de iure*

M. G. Muzzarelli and G. Todeschini, eds., *La Storia degli ebrei nell'Italia medioevale: tra filologia e metodologia* (Bologna, 1990), 102–14.

[27] The blood, of course, was symbolic of money, whose circulation, as even these economists keenly perceived, was economically essential; see the classic Benjamin Nelson, *The Idea of Usury*, 2nd edn. (Chicago, 1969).

personarum extra ecclesiae gremium [Tract on the Laws of those Outside the Church], may make resort only to that Mosaic law (that of the Torah alone), which governs ceremonials. Rabbinic law, meaning Jewish civil law, was forbidden.[28] Through insisting that Jews be integrated fully into the prevailing systems of law, the state would – and did – claim the prerogative to decide the fate of individuals as Jews, a prerogative it selectively, yet frighteningly, chose on occasion to exercise in the form of kidnapping and virtually forced conversion. This nefarious practice, to enormous Jewish discomfiture, continued literally until the Papal State fell in 1870. And it is with this chilling thought in mind, remembering that it was taking place against the background of constant conversionary pressure and in an atmosphere primed to explode as it had at Trent, that we turn to the salient details of what till now we have seen only in broad outline.

HUMANIST ATTITUDES

The place to begin is Trent. My sense is that the events of 1475 were a driving force in the sixteenth century's resurrection and eventual sharpening of the conversionary policies of early fifteenth-century Iberia. It was at Trent, was it not, that Jewish women were forcibly baptized and their children removed, which may have prompted Zasius to defend the position of baptism against parental will (*invitis parentibus*) that Rome would eventually (if with seemingly arbitrary qualifications) adopt? Likewise, the need that perhaps Zasius, but certainly others, felt to prevent what they saw as irreparable Jewish damage to Christian society stands out in the opinion issued by the well-known Paduan jurist and auditor of the high Papal Court of the Sacred Rota, G. F. Pavini, who validated the (irregular) legal proceedings and the baptisms of late 1475 and early 1476.[29]

Typical of many jurists emanating from the law school at Padua, Pavini, in his anxiety to control Jews and bring them, if possible, to the baptismal font, claimed that the traditional theological doctrine of "Perpetual Servitude" – which, in fact, meant only that Jews must be subservient to

[28] Antonio Ricciullo I. C. Roblanense, Patritio Rhegino, in Aula Romana Advocato, *Tractatus de iure personarum extra ecclesiae gremium existentium, cui propter argumenti similitudinem annexus est alter Tractactus De Neophytis* (Rome, 1622).

[29] On these matters, see Anna Esposito and Diego Quaglioni, *Processi contro gli ebrei di Trento, 1475–1478*, vol. I (Padua, 1990), 41–51; and also Quaglioni, *Propaganda antiebraica e polemiche di Curia*, in Massimo Miglio, Francesca Niutta, Diego Quaglioni, and Concetta Ranieri, eds., *Un Pontificato ed una città: Sixto IV 1471–1484* (Vatican City, 1984), 243–66; Quaglioni, "I giuristi medeoevali e gli ebrei: due 'consultationes' di G. F. Pavini 1478," *Quaderni Storici* 64 (1987), 7–18, esp. 13–14; and Quaglioni, ed., *Apologia iudaeorum, invectiva contra Platinam* (Rome, 1987).

the Church and its laws – should be combined with the (actually artificial) civil doctrine of *Servi camerae nostrae* ("Chamber Serfdom"), whose real sense was the creation of a direct link between Jews and the Emperor. Even this status, which protected Jews but also strengthened imperial powers, dangerously, and singularly, exposed Jews to vituperation and abuse; it was, after all, the lot of no other people. However, by combining the two "servitudes," legists might (arbitrarily) conclude that Jews were *true servi*, deprived of all civil rights, including those of power over their children. The first to move in this direction was the fourteenth-century Oldradus de Ponte, who also said that, as *servi*, Jews might be expelled for gross misbehavior.[30]

To be sure, the majority opinion on the question of *servi* and expulsion was that Jews were not true *servi*. Representing this opinion, Marquardus de Susannis pointed to Thomas Aquinas, who had said that Jews were bound by "civil [not real] servitude," and, hence, they should be tolerated, not expelled, and that they should also enjoy "fatherly power" over their children. Nonetheless, by the later seventeenth century, the opposing spirit, that of Thomas's rough contemporary Duns Scotus, which, on the grounds of servitude, said Jewish children might be taken, began to garner exponents.[31]

Like Pavini, moreover, many of those adopting the Scotist position were humanists, as were many others among his staunchest supporters, including Platina, the Vatican librarian, the Trentino Raffaele Zovenzoni, and the physician Tiberino. The latter's description of Simonino's corpse and his "passion" – including torture by "Jewish dogs": the Jews barked (*ululare*) when Simonino was brought into the death-chamber – was crucial. The local bishop at Trent, Johannes Hinderbach, was also a humanist.[32] What no doubt moved these people was the growing "scientific" awareness and wonderment generated by the new understanding at this time that the universe was populated with unknowable forces, the so-called darker side of the Renaissance – which has been shown to have easily aroused fears of magic and nefarious crimes.[33] Humanists were also aware

[30] See Esposito and Quaglioni, *Processi*, 37–41; and Norman Zacour, *Jews and Saracens in the Consilia of Oldradus de Ponte* (Toronto, 1990). The original text is Oldradus de Ponte, *Consilia* (1478), Cons. 51, c. 42vA–B.

[31] Marquardus de Susannis, *De iudaeis et aliis infidelibus* (Venice, 1558), pt. III, ch. 2, para. 6, pt. I, ch. 7; Kenneth Stow, "Church, Conversion, and Tradition: the Problem of Jewish Conversion in Sixteenth Century Italy," *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 2 (1996), 26–35; and see, too, David Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York, 1997).

[32] Quaglioni, *Propaganda*, 253.

[33] Marc Bensimon, "Modes of Perception of Reality in the Renaissance," in Robert Kinsman, ed., *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance, Beyond the Fields of Reason* (Berkeley, 1974), 221–72.

of ancient texts with their versions of ritual murder. In addition, and more or less contemporaneously to Trent, Sigismondo de' Conte di Foligno accused the Jews – he said "Marranos" – of bringing the then-virulent, and new, disease of syphilis into Europe.[34] Jews were feared to infect not only the Christian soul, but also the Christian body.

One may counter that not all humanists shared these dangerous views, most notably Johannes Reuchlin, who argued, against no less an opponent than Zasius himself, that Jewish books should not be burned. Because of this stance, some have seen Reuchlin as a precursor of a more "humane" approach to Jews. Did Reuchlin not say: "Jews should not be denied what the justice [lit., law] of human society grants them?" Yet it is more likely that Reuchlin defended rabbinic literature in order to allow himself to promote his own study of the Kabbalah, and his missionizing aspirations. These latter aims are precisely the idea ensconced in the words of the thirteenth-century canonist Giovanni Andrea, which, in fact, Reuchlin was here citing verbatim. Neither he nor Giovanni Andrea were at all speaking of tolerance in a modern sense. They were repeating the old, indeed, millenarian, principle that one did not expel Jews, because it would be detrimental to their conversion.[35] Expelling Jews, nonetheless, is what appealed to so many humanists – to wit, the noted Jacob Wimpheling of Strasbourg, who, about 1508, extolled the expulsion of Jews from that city.[36]

This novel and disturbing humanist input may partly explain the paradox of Trent, namely, the resistance to the charges against the Jews on the part of the Franciscan pope, Sixtus IV, and his delegate, the Dominican Bishop Battista de' Giudice, putatively representatives of a more traditional intellectual posture, who declared the trial illegal.[37] Not that Sixtus was a

[34] Anna Foa, "Il nuovo e il vecchio: l'insorgere della sifilide 1494–1530," *Quaderni Storici* 19 (1984), 11–34, esp. 20–2 (English translation in E. Muir and G. Ruggiero, eds., *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective* [Baltimore, 1990]).

[35] *Additiones* to Guilielmus Durantis, *Speculum iuris*, 3 vols. (Venice, 1585), III, 488. *Additio* to *De iudaeis et saracenis*: "Vidi quaedam solennia scripta septem rationibus concludentia, quod princeps pacificos infideles de suis terris absque legitima causa non debet expellere . . . Alias oves habeo, quae non sunt ex hoc ovili scilicet ecclesiae . . . Successor ergo Petri habet illas pascere et defendere, ergo non impugnare, vel laedi permittere . . . Item coelum coeli domino, terram autem dedit filiis hominum, ergo negandum eis non est, quod ius humanae societatis concedit," cited by Kenneth Pennington, http://faculty.cua.edu/pennington/canon%20law/LasCasas2.html.

[36] See on Wimpheling and the Jews, Debra Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg* (Stanford, 2011), 12, 69.

[37] Sixtus referred to the *Sicut iudaeis non* bull issued by Innocent III, not the version in the codified *Decretales* (X.5,6,9); see Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, 8 vols. (Toronto, 1990), no. 999; Innocent warned against (alleged) Jewish plots; Sixtus implied there were no such plots at Trent.

"friend" of the Jews. At one point, he had insisted that Jews in his papal domains be judged *tanquam veri cives* ("as proper citizens [with clear rights]").[38] Yet, in the contemporary Franciscan spirit, Sixtus also reversed long-standing papal policies and prohibited Jews from lending *openly* at interest,[39] and in a letter he sent to Saragossa of 1479, he lambasted the: *contagione iudaica . . . ut christicolas a veritate seducere et se voluptatum suarum compotes facere valeant* ("the Jewish *contagion* . . . that allows Jews to seduce Christians from the way of truth and to make them sharers of their excesses").[40] In the event, moreover, Sixtus's use of the term *veri cives*, though indicating rights, also meant subservience to the law of the land and the consequent lessening of Jewish powers of self-governance in their communities, small as these powers already were.

Sixtus IV's ultimate solution to Jewish issues was the traditional papal middle ground. No matter how the foundations were tottering, Sixtus, like all his predecessors, called only for correction. He certainly did not encourage violence. Jews, as the mass of contemporary legal opinion said, were, and must be, regarded as *fideles* of the Church Militant, members of the *popolo Romano* – provided they live peacefully – which was precisely the message Sixtus sent to the leaders of Trent. He reinforced his words in 1482 by saying Jews were unimpeachably entitled to due legal process.[41] A road toward accommodation had to be found. It was perhaps just this papal hesitancy to abandon tradition that moved the three principal Hebrew chroniclers of this time to warn that popes like Sixtus IV should be judged circumspectly. Joseph ha-Kohen, Benjamin ben Elnatan, and Shelomo ibn Verga each tell stories of (probably fictitious) libels at Rome in which the pope eventually acts to derail Christian knavery.[42] Nonetheless, practical experience and knowledge seem also to have told these Jews that papal actions were sometimes shaped by forces that the popes did not exclusively control.[43] However much he would have wished to censure people like

[38] Simonsohn, *Apostolic See*, no. 1007.

[39] The emphasis falls on "openly": *Apostolic See*, nos. 954, 967, 1005, 1024.

[40] *Apostolic See*, nos. 972, 998, 1002; and Fausto Parente, "La Chiesa e il Talmud," in C. Vivanti, ed., *Gli ebrei in Italia, storia d'Italia* (Turin, 1996), I, 524–634, esp. 567.

[41] Kenneth Pennington on "criminal procedure," in http://faculty.cua.edu/pennington/law508/CriminalProcedure.htm.

[42] Shelomo ibn Verga, *Shebet Jehudah,* ed. A. Shohat (Jerusalem, 1957), 162; Yosef ha-Kohen, *'Emeq haBakh'a*, ed. M. Letteris (Krakow, 1895), 132, 148–50; Benjamin ben Elnatan, in Isaiah Sonne, ed., *Mi-Pavolo ha-Revi'i 'ad Pius ha-Hamishi* (Jerusalem, 1954), 23–4. Ibn Verga's tale takes place decades before the one in the other two chronicles. Whether all three tales are related remains to be studied.

[43] On papal problems with the likes of inquisitors and Observant Franciscans, see M. G. Muzzarelli, "Ebrei, Bologna e sovrano-pontifice: la fine di una relazione tra verifiche, restrizioni e ripensamenti," in Muzzarelli, ed., *Verso l'epilogo di una convivenza: gli ebrei a*

Hinderbach and Pavini, a constellation of political and family-centered forces allowed Pope Sixtus to do no more than warn them only by allusion against repeating the event. More ominously, pressures from outside the Church were going to combine with an internal drive for sometimes radical reform to lead the popes themselves to undertake extreme actions.

CONVERSIONARY POLICY: THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

At the turn of the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church, and Catholic society, faced difficult choices. The Protestant Reformation, a self-generated internal drive for Catholic reform, and the discoveries of New Worlds peopled by untold numbers of the "unsaved" said to be thirsty for salvation required a decisive response. Perhaps the time for converting the Jews, too, had arrived, thus to validate Catholic claims to *exclusive* religious truth.[44] Conversionary ardor was accompanied by flashes of millenarian expectation. In 1556, Pope Paul IV wrote to his sister that he had been chosen to hasten the advent of the Millennium.[45] Millennial expectations concerning Jews abound in texts that invoke John 10:16, anticipating the union of all in the single flock of Christ at the end of days, an event which these texts suggest is about to be realized.

Millennial expectation seems also to have motivated Marquardus de Susannis. His *De iudaeis et aliis infidelibus* substantiates juridically the policies initiated by Pope Paul IV in 1555, whose bull, issued in July of that year, *Cum nimis absurdum*, established the Roman ghetto, ushering in the age of the ghetto throughout the Papal States, and elsewhere in Italy. At the heart of this bull, however, is not the ghetto itself, but a clause first introduced in the later fifteenth century. Jews, it says, are no longer accepted into Christendom principally on the basis of *caritas*, that is, the fundamental justice that Paul had noted in his Epistle to the Romans.[46] Rather, they are tolerated *ad hoc ut*: to the end that they see the light and convert.[47]

Bologna nel xvi secolo (Florence, 1996), pp. 19–54; also David Ruderman, "An Apologetic Treatise from Sixteenth Century Bologna," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 50 (1979), 253–75; and Shlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Jerusalem, 1977), 32–9.

[44] See P. Quirini and P. Giustiniani, *Libellus ad Leonem Decem, Annales Camuldulenses* (1773).

[45] Stow, *Catholic Thought*, 274–5; Adriano Prosperi, "New Heaven and New Earth: Prophecy and Propaganda at the Time of the Discovery and Conquest of the Americas," in Marjorie Reeves, ed., *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period* (Oxford, 1992), 279–306.

[46] The Latin in the bulls is *caritas*, meaning "justice," not as regularly – and incorrectly – translated by the English cognate, "charity."

[47] Stow, *Catholic Thought*, 298.

More than the era of the Italian ghetto, then, Paul IV had ushered in a period of papal devotion to conversion for which the only true precedent was the policy of Benedict XIII. That Paul's *Cum nimis absurdum* reiterates the restrictive clauses found in Benedict's *Etsi doctoris gentium*, and caps them with segregation, was no accident. Indeed, Benedict's policies had already been taken up in the reforming tract the *Libellus ad Leonem Decem* composed in 1513 (that is, before Luther's revolt) by the Camaldulese monks Quirini and Giustiniani, and they appear again in the conversionary *De sola lectione* of the Jesuit Francisco de Torres.[48] The use of restriction should persuade the Jews to convert.

But what justified this method, which – at its start, but not later – eschewed any semblance of direct force? Quite simply, harsh and consistently applied law like that edicted by the bull *Cum nimis* was believed capable of persuading the Jews of the hopelessness of their lot, while avoiding direct force was also the only way to ensure that conversion be sincere, heralding the Millennium's arrival, as St. Paul had predicted. Paul IV must have agreed – in principle, although, as we shall see, not in fact – with the cardinal and Bolognese Professor of Canon Law Pier Paolo Pariseo, who had argued that even the descendants of the Portuguese Jews, who had all been *forcibly* converted by royal order in 1497, were not true Christians, for they had never assented to baptism – with the shocking result that many had become crypto-Jews and heretical apostates. In Rome, such a predicament had to be avoided, even while "voluntary conversion" was assiduously pursued.[49]

Indeed, after 1555, the papal dedication to conversion never flagged. It was also encouraged by the important, if distinct, precedent of Venice, which, in 1516, decided to allow Jews (who previously had lived permanently only in mainland Mestre) to inhabit the ghetto – a small island by that name – within Venice itself (hence, the origin of the name). The point of this segregation was, as the Venetians put it, to avoid divine wrath for allowing Jews in at all. The ghetto would also, perhaps following the lead of Benedict XIII, defend the purity of what the Venetians saw as the sacred space of the Venetian civic *Corpus Christi*.[50] Indeed, defending the earthly

[48] De Torres and the *Libellus* are discussed in Stow, *Catholic Thought*, 215–30, and see there, too, the text and translation of *Cum nimis absurdum*, 291–8.

[49] See especially Anna Foa, "Il gioco del proselimitismo: politica della conversioni e controllo della violenza nella Roma del Cinquecento," in M. Luzzati, Michele Olivari, and Alessandra Veronese, eds., *Ebrei e cristiani nell'Italia medievale e moderna: conversioni, scambi, contrasti* (Rome, 1988); also Kenneth Stow, "Converts and *Conversos* in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in B. Garvin and B. Cooperman, eds., *The Jews of Italy, Memory and Identity* (College Park, 2000).

[50] Dana Katz, "'Clamber not you up to the casements': on ghetto views and viewing," *Jewish History* 24 (2010), 127–53.

incarnations of the *Corpus Christi* – the body of the Church was often referred to as the *corpus ecclesiae mysticum*, while that of the city was called simply the *Corpus Christi* – had, in fact, been central in papal Jewry policies for centuries.[51] The novelty was seeking to attain this end through segregation. But, as said, Paul IV also went one step farther. Through the laws of *Cum nimis absurdum*, he would turn social segregation into a conversionary device. The ghetto would be the venue where the Jews would experience the "pious lashes," the *piis verberibus*, whose sting, said the *Libellus ad Leonem Decem*, would make them hasten to convert. Francisco de Torres, too, spoke of making Jews "suck at husks to quench their thirst."[52] In this same spirit, Paul IV also raised Jewish taxes enormously.[53]

Jewish professions also were limited, mostly to the sale of second-hand clothing and its repair. Dealing in anything new, as well as Jewish agricultural wholesaling, once an important source of Roman Jewish income, were forbidden.[54] Distinctive garb, a ghetto wall, and the prohibition of honorific titles as simple as *Signore* were enforced. Jewish "banking," principally small loans, was slowly displaced, especially in the seventeenth century, by the Roman Monte di pietà, a public loan society. In 1682, Jewish banks were permanently closed, which destroyed the remaining Roman Jewish economy. Not only the banker and his immediate family, but also a circle of (not always related) dependants in the banker's direct, or indirect, employ, found themselves without an income; and the loss rippled through the ghetto.[55]

[51] On this, see Elizabeth Crouzet-Pavan, "Venice between Jerusalem, Byzantium, and Divine Retribution," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991), 164; and Edward Muir, "The Virgin on the Street Corner: The Place of the Sacred in Italian Cities," in Steven Ozment, ed., *Religion and Culture in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Kirksville, 1989), 28.

[52] Stow, *Catholic Thought*, 219; the concept *piis verberibus* also derives from Gregory the Great, speaking of correction following sin.

[53] Both de Torres and Paul IV were following Gregory the Great, saying that a *rusticus* may be brought to the baptismal font by heavy imposts. On this, see Kenneth Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, In the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 34 (1972), 435–59. See also Stow, *Taxation, Community, and State: The Jews and the Fiscal Foundations of the Early Modern Papal State* (Stuttgart, 1982), recalling Gregory the Great, saying that a *rusticus* may be brought to the baptismal font legitimately by shouldering him with an enormous fiscal burden. And see, too, Parente, "La Chiesa e il Talmud," 524–634, esp. 567.

[54] Selling food was forbidden, as was dining in common.

[55] Luciano Allegra, *Identità in bilico: il ghetto ebraico di Torino nel Settecento* (Turin, 1996), 228–31; see also Kenneth Stow, "The Good of the Church, the Good of the State: The Popes and Jewish Money," in D. Wood, ed., *Christianity and Judaism: Studies in Church History* 29 (1992), 237–52.

Most importantly, the papal vicar, by about 1640, closed down the institution of Jewish notaries, rabbinic scholars, who, from about 1530, had developed a Jewish *ars dictaminis*, a notarial art of registering contracts, oaths, and most of all taking down testimony in arbitrated disputes. Their registers served as the archive for what amounted to surrogate Jewish courts that facilitated consensual arbitration and, thus, were especially important at a time when ecclesiastical authorities were anxious to quash all forms of Jewish communal self-governance, to wit, in the 1621 decision of the Rota, followed by interpretations like those of Ricciulo, which others, too – for instance, Sessa – would accept, sharply limiting Jewish resort to rabbinic law, the Halakhah.[56]

Completing papal conversionary policy were measures like the establishment of the Roman Casa dei catecumeni ("the House of Converts"), first proposed by (the founder of the Jesuit Order) Ignazio di Loyola in 1542; this institution would have a long and tarnished history.[57] In addition, anticipating *Cum nimis absurdum*, the Talmud was burned in 1553; the burning's purpose, says the bull *Cum sicut nuper*, issued on May 29, 1554, was to promote conversion. However, on this subject, there was no unanimity. Certain Catholic thinkers argued – as did, for one, Tomasso Campanella – that many talmudic texts, properly understood, prove that Jesus is the messiah. These texts, Campanella said, should be saved; the perverse ones should be burned.[58]

In addition, in 1584, Jews were ordered to attend missionary sermons; these sermons continued through the pontificate of Pius IX toward the middle of the nineteenth century. Shortly before, in 1581, the bull *Antiqua Iudaeorum improbitas* authorized the Roman Papal Inquisition to enquire into the behavior of Jews with respect to the canons and recent legislation. Previously, the Papal Inquisition had summoned Jews principally to charge them with preventing conversion or wooing converts back to Judaism.[59] Now the Inquisition was to be the instrument of Jewish "discipline"; and

[56] See, on this episode, Camelo Trasselli, "Un ufficio notarile per gli ebrei di Roma," *Archivio per il R. Deputazione Romana di Storia Patria* 60 (1938), 231–44; also Kenneth Stow, *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century* (Seattle, 2001), esp. ch. 3 n. 76.

[57] See Anna Foa, "The Religious Orders and Conversion," in S. McMichael and S. Meyers, eds., *The Friars and the Jews in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Leiden, 2002), 299–312.

[58] Tomasso Campanella, *Per la conversione degli ebrei* (Florence, 1955), 147; Stow, "The Burning," 455.

[59] The most comprehensive survey of the renewed Papal Inquisition is Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali di Coscienza, Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin, 1996); and see Katherine Aron Beller, *Jews on Trial: The Papal Inquisition in Modena, 1598–1638* (Manchester, 2011).

discipline it would, especially in locales like Modena, where there was no ghetto until 1638. Inquisitionally imposed discipline was crucial, too, in other places, which, like Modena, lay outside the borders of the Papal State. These included places where ghettos were erected only in the mid eighteenth century – the last in Piedmont and Reggio Emilia – just decades before the arrival of Napoleon, who ordered ghettos dismantled, as well as, tellingly, closing the Roman Casa dei catecumeni, which did not reopen until 1814.[60]

Discipline should not, however, be confused with arbitrary excess; punishments were mostly fines.[61] Yet the carefully regulated "discipline" that was intended to encourage conversion could still threaten disaster, as exemplified by the warning in *Antiqua Iudaeorum improbitas* of punishment for practitioners of magic and *sortilegia*. On the basis of these charges, Pope John XXII had expelled Jews, though briefly, from the papal territories around Avignon in France, in 1322, and it was these same charges that resurfaced in the bulls *Hebraeorum gens* and *Caeca et obdurata* to justify expelling Jews from the Papal States – except for Rome, Ancona, and French Avignon – temporarily, in 1569, and definitively in 1593.[62]

In the hands of inquisitors like G. P. Carafa (the future Paul V) and Michele Ghislieri (the future Pius V), the Inquisition could also be deadly. In 1556, it ordered the burning at the stake of twenty-five Portuguese Jews in Ancona. Here, politics and religion clashed, with a measure of hypocrisy. For these Portuguese, living openly as Jews, had come to Ancona in the early 1530s at papal request, specifically to develop the city's port, to enable it to compete with that of Venice, which, in retaliation, soon invited "Portuguese" of its own.[63] To insure their safety, the Anconitans were guaranteed freedom from Inquisitional prosecution, even though it was an open secret that all of them had been baptized (by force) in 1497. This guarantee, however, did not deter Paul IV, who saw the Anconitans only as apostates.

[60] On the progress of ghetto foundations, the last in Correggio, see Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Turin, 1963), 527–8.

[61] See Beller, *Jews on Trial*; and Federica Francesconi, "Jewish Families in Modena from the Renaissance to the Napoleonic Emancipation (1600–1810)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Haifa, 2007), imminently *Invisible Enlighteners: Modenese Jewry from Renaissance to Emancipation*.

[62] Kenneth Stow, "Papal Mendicants or Mendicant Popes: Continuity and Change in Papal Policies Toward the Jews at the End of the Fifteenth Century," in McMichael and Myers, eds., *The Friars and the Jews*.

[63] See Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1969), XIV, 39–43; and Bernard Cooperman, "Venetian Policy Towards Levantine Jews and Its Broader Italian Context," in G. Cozzi, ed., *Gli ebrei e Venezia* (Milan, 1987), 65–84.

Such excesses were frequently justified by the notion that their commission was for the "good of the faith" (*ad honorem et decorum fidei* or *favor fidei*), a legal concept that goes back originally to at least Gratian's *Decretum* of 1144.[64] The term is not, as sometimes thought, a fuzzy theological notion.[65] Nonetheless, over time, it became too expansively used. The "good of the faith" justified closing Jewish loan-banks in 1682, and it was again the justification for allowing Roman converts from Judaism who were still minors to receive inheritances immediately upon converting.[66] Perhaps nowhere was the motif of promoting the faith used more tendentiously than when it was applied to sustain the legality of snatching a young child or young woman from their home – virtual kidnappings, like the most famous one, of Edgardo Mortara, in 1858. Pope Pius IX and his Curia decided to stay the course and not give Edgardo back to his parents, regardless of the cost to the Papal State – which, in fact, was its dismemberment two years later. Edgardo, however, was not the first. Kidnapping (justified as the taking of a child already baptized – often by a wet nurse – the sequestration of a child following the request of a person deemed to enjoy parental authority or as the arrest of a young woman said by a man who claimed to be her fiancé to have expressed a will to convert), began in earnest about 1650.[67]

By contrast, neither faith nor legal requirements, but purely *fiscal* concerns, made Alexander VII, in 1657, order Jews to pay the rents – to the Christian owners – on unoccupied ghetto dwellings (the sudden surplus being an effect of the plague of 1656, in which about 800 Jews died). Fiscal concerns, too, underlay the various attempts to fund papal loans to the tottering Roman Jewish community by having Rome's Jews purchase *luoghi*, or shares, in the so-called Monti, the rough equivalent of modern

[64] To wit, the late fourteenth-century legist Gaspar Calderini, citing Gratian's twelfth-century *Decretum*, said the laws always cede to *favor fidei*, since there is no higher value than faith; C. 2, q. 7, c. 26, *Consilia* (Venice, 1497), no. 487.3, fol. 72v; cited in an unpublished and untitled essay by Aviad Kleinberg. The concept reappeared in de Susannis's *De iudaeis et aliis infidelibus*, pt. I, ch. 3: *favore fidei* and *ad favorem et decorum fidei*, which Sessa cited, declaring, "*Favor fidei* [as a legal principle] *amplissimus est*" ("has great import"), 172. Marcelo Fernando Parma, *El favor fidei en el Decretum Gratiani* (Rome, 2009).

[65] This is especially the case in Marina Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati: storie di ebrei, cristiani e convertiti nella Roma dei papi* (Rome, 2004), who sees the concept in a decidedly cynical vein. In fact, its application was a matter of much legal debate, revealing a "principled perversity" with respect to baptismal policy which was more grievous, as I see it, than cynical opportunism.

[66] Kenneth Stow, "Neofiti and their Families, or Perhaps, the Good of the State," *Leo Baeck Year Book* 46 (2002), 105–16.

[67] Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*.

municipal bonds.[68] And it was also a need for funding that moved the Curia in 1732 to direct the Holy Office (the Inquisition) to prepare the document known as the *Memoriale Generale*, whose purpose was to find a way around Jewish communal bankruptcy. A century earlier, financial soakings were aimed at promoting conversion. Now the impoverishment that the popes had deliberately created had virtually forced them – in their other, non-theological, role as the heads of an early modern state[69] – in the contradictory direction of propping up the very institution, the Jewish community, their conversionary impulses were determined to destroy. In the same spirit, in 1668, the popes exchanged the Jews' forced participation in the races of Carnevale, which had become a source of enormous mockery, for a tax. No less incongruous were the bulls, regularly issued at this time of year, *di non molestare ebrei* ("not to perturb the Jews").[70] *Molestare* ("to molest"), however, had by now become the Jews' constant lot under an unrelenting papal hand.

The Jews, those of Rome in particular, never expected such a drastic papal turn. Roman Jews had consistently enjoyed a privileged position, suffering neither expulsion nor significant upheaval during Christianity's 1,200-year tenure in the city. The original ghetto decree of 1555 surprised them, and, at first, they referred to it only as an order "to live together."[71] Indeed, only in 1589 did they verbally recognize that the ghetto was to be permanent by referring to it as *nostro ghet*, punning on the Hebrew to mean "our bill of divorce."[72] Moreover, it took decades – in fact, more than a century – before the conversionary policy reached maximum fury.

Generalizing about Jews outside the Papal State is difficult. In the rest of Italy, ghettos proliferated but slowly, sometimes in relation to the quality of the relationship between local rulers and the papacy, as may be argued for Piedmont and Tuscany. The Venetians always maintained a degree of independence.[73] The German patchwork political reality – including imperial intentions to retain Jews as direct dependants – and the continuous

[68] Stow, *Taxation*, 50–2; and Mario Rosa, "La Santa Sede e gli ebrei nel Settecento," in Vivanti, ed., *Gli ebrei di Italia*, II, 1069–87.

[69] See Paolo Prodi, *The Papal Prince: One Body and Two Souls – the Papal Monarchy in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Susan Haskins (New York, 1988).

[70] Attilio Milano, *Il ghetto di Roma* (Rome, 1964), 97, 313–18.

[71] See Kenneth Stow, *The Jews in Rome*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1995 and 1997), no. 1723.

[72] Kenneth Stow, "The Consciousness of Closure: Roman Jewry and its *Ghet*," in David Ruderman, ed., *Essential Papers in Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (New York, 1992).

[73] On Piedmont, see Allegra, *Identità in bilico*, ch. 1, *passim*; and also the suggestive arguments of Stefanie Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence: The Construction of an Early Modern Jewish Community* (Stanford, 2006).

violence of wars, let alone the division between Protestant and Catholic regions, almost by definition undermined uniformity. Imposed Jewish areas of residence, like that of Frankfurt, were thus fundamentally politically motivated; the Church was not in control. In Poland, it was the nobles who determined Polish Jewry's fate. Nobles were also rarely responsive to the many clerical charges then being made of Jewish blasphemy and ritual murder.[74] Besides, a number of Polish bishops were lending to Jews and themselves receiving – illegal – interest, which, as we are about to see, made the popes fume.

DARKENING HUES: THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

The word that perhaps best describes the papal mood by the eighteenth century is "frustration." Segregation and restriction had not led to large-scale Jewish conversion, nor had they vanquished the kind of anxiety about Jewish pollution and ritual murder expressed in 1475. The floods of the Tiber, it was said, may wash the dirt from ghetto walls, but they cannot clean the filth from the Jewish soul.[75] Moreover, from the late seventeenth century, and even more during the eighteenth, a new and frightening enemy made its appearance: modernity, with its winds of secularization; and the Jew – the perennial embodiment of opposition – was made to symbolize both. Once again, it was intellectuals who were loudly beating the drum. The mid eighteenth-century Benedict XIV, who may have been one of the Jews' greatest papal nemeses, has been described as perhaps the leading scholar ever to sit on the papal throne. However, this pope was anything but a promoter of the Enlightenment. His bull *Providas* repeats the condemnation of the Freemasons made first by his predecessor Clement XIII, including the citation of an ancient text that alludes to ritual murder – this time not by Jews, but the association with them was surely made.[76] Threats on another, truly sophisticated plane came from

[74] Magda Teter, *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era* (New York, 2006).

[75] See Luigi Maria Benetelli, *Le saette di Gionata scagliate a favor degli Ebrei* (Venice, 1703), 410; cited in Rose Marie San Juan, *Rome, a City Out of Print* (Minneapolis, 2001), 129–60.

[76] On March 16, 1751, Benedict published the Constitution *Providas*, in which he inserted in full *In Eminenti*, the bull which had been written by his predecessor Clement XII. The bull refers to a text of Minucius Felix, "Le cose oneste amano sempre la pubblica luce; le scelleratezze sono segrete," in a passage where this ancient polemic accuses Christians of ritually slaughtering children. See http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/papal/providas.html.

those astute historical scholars (even by modern standards) the Jesuit Bollandists, named after their founder, John Bolland, who called Antwerp their home and whose work consisted of gathering and verifying (by validating the date of written testimonies, but not, however, their accuracy) the lives of saints and martyrs, including, of course, the lives of "victims" of ritual murder. These tales, sterling *exempla* of Catholic sacrifice, were understood to reaffirm Catholic purity and the holiness of the Eucharist, but, most of all, the powers of the Virgin.[77] In other words, their texts served as a perfect anti-Protestant foil.[78] If they were also seen as exposing what the Bollandists considered the Jews' perverse nature, so much the better.

Indeed, the Bollandists must have been horrified as they watched the crypto-Jews of the Low Countries beginning to practice Judaism openly, and there should be little wonder that, in the Bollandists' grand work, the *Acta sanctorum* – which includes, among others, stories of ritual murder – Jews appear perpetually bent on attacking the *Corpus Christi*, whether in its physical, historical, mystical, or Eucharistic dimension. The Jews, as the Bollandists pictured them, also engaged in magic, alongside usurious exploitation. This was a chilling portrayal, from which the step to a wider vision of the Jews as both the real and the potential murderers of Christian society as a whole – and, for that matter, of every individual Christian – was small. Expressed literally 300 years later by Bishop Antonio de Pol of Vicenza, the Jews "deceiving" Christians about Lorenzino of Marostica (a purported fifteenth-century ritual murder victim) – "aspirano non tanto ad uccidere un cristiano, quanto ad uccidere lo stesso Cristianesimo" – were out "to murder Christianity itself."[79]

In this atmosphere, however fantastic, controlling Jews became a priority. Even the ages-old principle of due legal process, enshrined in the bull of the late twelfth century *Sicut iudaeis non*, which Innocent III called the

[77] The most prominent "victims" in these tales, all children, have their saints' days on the 24 and 25 March, close to and on the Day of the Annunciation (*ActaSS*, July 6:494–5), thanks, no doubt, to the role often assigned the Virgin in the miracle of the child's death and its aftermath. The Bollandists also tell the full story of the arch-paradigmatic Jewish victim, Werner; see n. 19.

[78] These stories also signify Catholic redemption – e.g., *ActaSS*, March 7:245; see Stow, *Jewish Dogs*, ch. 2, *passim.* Jesuit followers retold ritual murder tales in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but were countered by, yes, modern Bollandists, Jesuits like François Halkin and Hippolyte Delehaye, who called the notion of ritual murder "inane": *Analecta Bollandiana* 43 (1925), 211; and 44 (1926), 183, respectively.

[79] Tomasso Caliò, "Antisemitismo e culto dei santi in età contemporanea: il caso del beato Lorenzino da Marostica," in Paolo Golinelli, ed., *Il pubblico dei santi, forme e livelli di ricezione dei messaggi agiografici* (Rome, 2000), 412, 421, 427. The Bollandists retell the stories of such murders allegedly committed in 1540, 1579, 1592, and even in Poland in 1598 (*ActaSS*, April 20:836).

Jews' Constitution, was being vacated.[80] Despite the numerous times this bull was reissued, as well as other protective letters, published as late as 1478 by Sixtus IV and 1535 by Paul III, the other side of the coin, restriction verging on force, was coming to the fore. The solution of 1475 at Trent, repression (without Trent's judicial murders), linked to spasms of baptismal manipulation, would be the papal order of the day, bolstered by rigid legal interpretation.

On the surface, the eighteenth-century papacy was re-enunciating the most restrictive of sixteenth-century legislation. In 1732, Pope Innocent XII renewed the demands of Paul IV, and in 1745, the few remaining commercial activities open to Jews outside the ghetto (during the daytime) were prohibited.[81] In 1751, the bull *A quo primum*, sent by Benedict XIV to the prelates of Poland, seethed with anger at Jewish lending to Polish bishops and suggested, as never before – and never after – that the monk Rudolph, who, in 1146, had preached the destruction of Jews or their forced conversion, was correct.[82] Maddeningly, *A quo primum* also spoke of "protecting Jews." However, by "protection," the pope meant literally of life and limb; the word *protectio* as used in *Sicut iudaeis non* had meant privileges and rights as well. By 1751, *protectio* seems to have been understood in its narrowest sense. In particular, *Sicut iudaeis non*'s central clause prohibiting forced baptism was about to be qualified. In that year, another letter of Benedict XIV determined that, should a convert, much in the manner of oblation, dedicate a child to the faith (technically, an "offering") – in particular, the child of a converted maternal grandmother – the Church might take that child, even forcibly, and bring it to the Casa dei catecumeni for baptism. By 1783, this ruling was extending to almost any relative, whose oblation could override the desires of a mother and father or a widowed Jewish mother and her co-guardians. The will of parents, their *patria potestas*, was being wholly disregarded.[83] The *ius commune*, Roman law, which, as many argued, prohibited such action, was being ignored in favor of the already noted principle of *ratio* or *favor fidei*. The embattled

[80] See Pennington, http://faculty.cua.edu/pennington/law508/CriminalProcedure.htm.

[81] Mario Rosa, "Tra tolleranza e ripressione: Roma e gli ebrei nel '700," in *Italia Judaica III* (Rome, 1989), 82, 86, 82; and Rosa, "La Santa Sede," esp. 1071–2.

[82] Rosa, "La Santa Sede," 1079. Benedict himself quickly retreated, in the bull itself, but his rhetoric recalls that of Cicero, whose oratorical devices included mentioning an ill then quickly denying it; the damage was done, as was observed in the text of Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli, eventually Clement XIV, rejecting the blood libel, as well as Benedict's citation, noted above, of Minucius Felix with reference to Freemasons; see Cecil Roth, *The Ritual Murder Libel and the Jew: The Report by Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli (Pope Clement XIV)* (London, 1935), 93.

[83] Rosa, "La Santa Sede," 1075–7.

Church of the day was pitting canonical, religious right against secular law. This was the exact opposite of what was going on outside the Papal State, with territorial rulers pressing the Church to cede long-treasured prerogatives over clergy, property, and eventually marriage.

The Church was going to remain firm. No "offered/dedicated" child was going to be returned. Even Cardinal Ganganelli, a Franciscan and the eventual Clement XIV, who was then a *consultore* of the Holy Office, seconded Benedict's 1751 ruling about "offerings." This was the same Ganganelli, who, in 1759, would write to deny the truth of the blood libel. Yet it seems that it was only he who had the courage to wonder out loud whether supporting libel accusations was a good idea: does it not make Jews hate us, he mused, making the possibility of their conversion ever more remote?[84] The paradox should not escape us – or was it a paradox? – that from the time of Sixtus IV in the fifteenth century, those stiff opponents of Jewish lending, Franciscans and Dominicans, as opposed to Jesuits like the Bollandists, were defending Jews against blood libels. Nor should it escape us that, as pope, between 1769 and 1774, Ganganelli favored what amounted to a fundamental change in practice and strategy. In 1769, he allowed Jews to practice long-forbidden professions, perhaps influenced by the school of Muratori, the anthologizer of Italian writing, and G. B. de Rossi, the Hebraist. Both had proposed a more irenic line toward Jews, in the tradition of those who thought kindness would lead to conversion.[85] Taking this tack would, of course, have corresponded to Ganganelli's concerns about ritual murder accusations and the promotion of baptism. On the subject of "offerings," however, Pope Clement subscribed to the hard line.

Yet even this pope's ameliorations were short-lived, just as they were overshadowed by the previous acts of Benedict XIV. Benedict burned thirty cartloads of Jewish books in Rome in 1753, and in 1755, he issued the bull *Beatus Andreas*, approving the cult of the ritual murder "victim" Andreas di Rinn. Benedict issued letters in favor of the cult of Lorenzo di Marostica as well.[86] For the first time – apart from Sixtus V's hesitant approbation of the *local* cult of Simonino of Trent – the Curia was formally calling ritual murder and blood libels true. And this was alongside additional libels then being touted by Jesuit Inquisitors, who were also busy lauding conversionary efforts in Poland aimed at reassuring a Church locked in conflict with the (Polish) Orthodox and Unionate Churches.[87] On occasion, it was even said Jews in Poland held the keys to Church doors – literally – and decided whether Christian prayer could

[84] Cited in Roth, *The Ritual Murder Libel*, 90. [85] Rosa, "La Santa Sede," 1082–5.
[86] Ibid., 1082. [87] Teter, *Heretics*, 99–100, 118–19, and *passim*.

take place.[88] These charges were the accompaniment to the issuance of *A quo primum* in 1751.

It was in this fearsome context that, in 1775, in the bull *Fra le pastorali sollecitudini*, Pope Pius VI canceled Clement XIV's easements, perhaps stimulated by the publication in Rome of *Ristretto della vita e martirio di San Simone fanciulli di Trento*, whose author, Francisco Rovira Bonet, was rector of the Casa dei catecumeni. In that same year, Pius VI attacked the writings of *Illuminati*. Repressing Jews and fighting the Enlightenment – the one deemed the identical twin of the other – went hand in hand. It was no accident that, in 1794, the same Rovira Bonet wrote *L'Armatura dei forti*, a manifesto against unbelievers and revolutionaries, but also against Muslims, Jews, Jansenists, and Freemasons.[89] Nor was it happenstance that, in the spirit of Paul's oft-repeated attack on Judaizers, the Lazarist Joseph Lambert identified Christians slighting the Eucharist with Jews desecrating the Host.[90]

The misplaced sense of an unbridled Jewish attack on Christianity also helps explain why the story of the Jew of Bourges, the ancient tale of the Jewish father who would cast his son into the fiery furnace rather than see him baptized, was alive, well, and being retold (in the eighteenth century) with a greater than ever intensity. In 1705, the convert Paolo Medici published and translated into Italian (apart from other accounts of blood libels he popularized) the Latin work of the Bohemian Jesuit and specialist in conversion, Jean Eder, which tells the hagiographic story, mentioned above, of Simon Abeles, "barbarically killed" by his own father in 1694, because the boy wanted to convert.[91] The Bourges *story* was now "fact," to be seconded in 1716, as noted earlier, by the jurist Giuseppe Sessa, whose opinions are normally balanced.

The notion of the Jewish murderer was also assuming a new twist. People were accusing Jews of importing bodily infections. Roman mattress makers in the eighteenth century said this directly. What alone remained to be said was that Jewish contact might infect not only mattresses to cause illness. It might also infect blood, which would be the kernel of the true racism whose time was quickly approaching.[92] Had Jews not previously been accused of importing syphilis to Europe? When St. Paul, in I

[88] Rosa, "La Santa Sede," 1078. [89] Ibid., 1083–5.

[90] Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture*, trans. F. Nicholson (New York, 1990), 437; see, too, Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater: The Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France* (Berkeley, 2000).

[91] See Marina Caffiero, "Tra Chiesa e Stato. Gli ebrei italiani dall'età dei Lumi agli anni della Rivoluzione," in Vivanti, ed., *Gli ebrei di Italia*, II, 1104 n. 41; and, most recently, Stow, "The Cruel Jewish Father."

[92] See again Foa, "Il nuovo e il vecchio"; and Caffiero, "Tra Chiesa e Stato," 1118–20.

Corinthians, spoke of preserving the purity of the Christian altar and its devotees through separation from nonbelievers – meaning Judaizers and possibly Jews, and however much he was exercised by the notion of physical purity and the separation of body and spirit – he was not thinking in such drastic, physical, terms.[93]

Still, even more than they were preoccupied with defending against imagined Jewish sallies, what principally moved the popes as they set policy was the drive to integrate the Jews into the Papal State. That integration, following the dictum of de Susannis, conditioned the civil on the religious. Full civil rights were dependent on right belief; there was no talk of legal equality and emancipation in their own right. Integration was to occur within a "confessional state," a melding of spheres which explains why the staunchest supporters of aggressive conversionary action also insisted that Jews submit unexceptionally to *ius commune*, "the law of the land," and that they cease resorting in civil matters to their own law, the Halakhah. Attempts were made to whittle down even laws of marriage and inheritance, which were considered *ceremonialia*, the kind of issue said to fall under the Mosaic Law that people like Ricciullo did permit Jews to observe. Deprived of all self-governance, it was expected the Jews would become exhausted and demoralized; and, fully incorporated into the system of *ius commune* – the civil aspect of integration, that is – they would also approach the baptismal font to make their integration complete.

Yet living under *ius commune* did not have to be an evil, at least should those enforcing it be civil, not ecclesiastical, authorities – those who, as it happens and as the eighteenth century progressed, were also questioning the concept of a confessional rather than a secular governing authority, and even in an otherwise confessional state. One sees a glimmer of light in this direction in the tractate on Jews of Giuseppe Sessa, who wrote of Jewish marriage as a civil contract, implying it was a model the state as a whole should adopt. Sessa also said that Jews, with rare exceptions, should be judged in state, not Church, courts. In 1558, Marquardus de Susannis had said the opposite, privileging always-suspect ecclesiastical venues. Sessa, in distinction, was seeking to strengthen the state, under whose aegis he believed all jurisdiction should be unified. With the exception of strictly religious issues, he said, Jews must enjoy *ius commune*'s privileges, precisely like all others, as well as being subject to its obligations.[94] Sessa also left *ceremonialia* in Jewish hands, principally marriage. That he was moving

[93] Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, 1996), 168–76.

[94] Both are cited by Kenneth Stow, "Equality under law, the confessional state, and emancipation: the example of the Papal State," *Jewish History* 25 (2011), 325, at nn. 34 and 35.

toward the ideal enunciated by Bartolus, that all citizens must be equal before the law, is clear.

Nonetheless, even for Sessa, the time was not ripe to see the complete picture, not to mention that he still harbored suspicions about Jewish intentions. He was also unequipped to conceive a civil society where religion was the source of neither benefit nor limitation, which was the ideal put forth by Thomas Jefferson in the new United States. Nor could he have ever imagined the French Revolution of 1791, which would offer Jews full rights in exchange for renouncing communal self-regulation, including, eventually, control over marriage, even while they freely remained Jews. Still, it was toward the future that Sessa was pointing, which, need it be said, was the diametric opposite of what was taking place in the Papal State. There, subjecting Jews to *ius commune* was an instrument of conversion. Stripping Jews of self-regulation led *not* to compensation, as it did in France, but to the option of conversion or further repression, including having Jewish children possibly "offered" for what would be virtually forced baptism.

True force, as I said, the relentlessly confessional state of the popes would not adopt. But it would pursue conversion aggressively through segregation, forcing Jews to live in diminished circumstances, pressuring them economically, reducing both public and private Jewish wealth, destroying communal institutions, and threatening communal officials, who sometimes seem to have been little more than tax-collectors for the state, with punishment for resistance. "Offerings" and kidnapping threatened the family as well, while propaganda about Jews attacking Christians, like that of Rovira Bonet or Paolo Medici, also took a toll. When Paul IV died in 1559, the populace rioted and put a Jew's hat on a famous Roman statue, as if somehow to identify attacks on Jews with an assault on Roman ways. In 1793, the tables had turned. Accusations that Jews were supporting French Jacobins led to a siege of the ghetto, with the crowd shouting "O muori, o fatti cristiano" ("Die or become a Christian").

The actual conversionary effect of all this exertion, however, was small. Nor did anybody trust converts themselves, whom the church obligated to join a confraternity that supervised all their activities, including their choice of mate. Still, a steady, if weak, stream of neophytes did enter the Casa dei catecumeni to emerge as Christians, which allowed the Papal State and its papal heads to pretend the goal of mass conversion was (gradually) being achieved. Each conversionary ceremony was accompanied by great pomp. Godparents were often members of the high clergy; at times, the godfather was the pope himself. Besides, a respectable number of candidates entered the Casa willingly, often for reasons of poverty, or anger at other Jews, and sometimes they entered out of true belief. Yet there were also those who had been dragged in, albeit this did not happen every day.

The circumstances had to be right: through an "offering." And Jews had found ways to protect themselves. They made matches between youths of near equal age, enhancing the possibilities of familial affect and solidarity, and, more effectively, they severely limited fertility, ensuring that there would be no large network of collateral relatives, one of whom might convert and "offer" another.[95]

There were also, we must point out, Christians whose moral sense was disturbed by acts which they considered improprieties. The lawyer Domenico Fiorello demanded to know why young women who had been denounced, most frequently by a convert with pretenses to marry them – the convert being poor, while the denounced girl was relatively well off – were dragged off and detained for days in the Casa dei catecumeni in Rome. The law said they should be taken to a neutral place. In fact, said Fiorello, it would be better were these young women released within hours, the instant it was clear they had never, whether now, or in the past, harbored intentions of conversion. Otherwise, were they detained for many days, no Jewish man would dare marry them, fearing they may have compromised their eventual offspring.[96]

But few were listening, and, as for the Church, it had its wiles. The question arose as to when a pregnant woman whose child had been "offered" might be taken and held in the Casa dei catecumeni, where her newborn would be seized and baptized upon its birth. The answer, as might be expected, was the moment life began. Medieval lawyers had said this occurred when the soul enters the body, about ninety days into the pregnancy. From the mid seventeenth century, it began to be said that the soul entered at conception; this entailed also reversing the common medieval opinion that the fetus was a part of the mother, which was now declared an independent being, with, of course, a soul, meaning, consequently, that no woman carrying "an offered fetus" could elude the Church's grasp.[97]

[95] See, on fertility, Massimo Livi Baci, "Ebrei, aristocratici e cittadini: precursori del declino della fecondità," *Quaderni Storici* 18 (1983), 919–39; and, on the Jewish family, Kenneth Stow, "From Civil Society to the Family: Transformations in Early Modern Jewish Confraternal Structure," in Stefania Pastore, Adriano Prosperi, and Nicholas Terpstra, eds., *Brotherhood and Boundaries / Fraternità e barriere* (Pisa, 2011), 121–32.

[96] See Stow, "Equality under law," 326, and Archivio storico della Comunità ebraica di Roma, 2Zd, 10 sup 2 06: *Consultatio super dubio an et quomodo sit procedendum cum infidelibus denunciatis, quod velint, sed per se nequeant comparere et petere Baptismum, ex quo praepeditur eis aditus, ne fidem Christi amplectantur. Monaldi 1721. Dominicus Caesar Florellus A.C. in criminalibus Locumtenens Generalis, S. Officii Consultor, et Reorum Advocatus.*

[97] See the doctrine in full in F. E. Cangiamila, *Sacra Embryologia* (Ingolstadt, 1765). This subject is fully discussed by Adriano Prosperi, *Dare l'anima* (Turin, 2005), 150–75.

Nor was this all. We have noted that, to enable even a female relative "to offer" a child, the rule of *patria potestas* ("parental rights"), normally reserved for fathers, was extended through complex legal maneuvers to women, making them, in this instance – but in this instance alone – the equals of men. In other spheres, the Papal State ate away at women's rights – for example, in not allowing women to inherit money or by forcing them to use a procurator to represent them in court. These rules applied to everybody, but when applied specifically to Jewish women, accustomed to a Jewish law that did permit inheritance and self-representation, they were especially hurtful. This was a harsh example of reducing older Jewish privilege by requiring Jews to use *ius commune* as this legal system functioned in the *confessional* Papal State, where the *aequitas* – the equity, the basic fairness and equality in law, that distinguish the modern nonconfessional state – could not flourish. Amazingly, as early as the mid sixteenth century, the Jewish physician David de Pomis had called for precisely such equality, as well as religious liberty.[98]

The Jews of Rome were nobody's fools. To defend themselves under the *ius commune* system, they hired Christian lawyers. Even Cardinal Giovanni Battista de Luca, the leading legal expert of the later seventeenth century, took up Jewish cases. Tellingly, he once argued that we learn that a particular commercial privilege is a right all citizens enjoy, because it is one that Jews, too, possess; Jewish status, as it were, was considered a paradigm of civil rights. But, of course, such an argument was rare, not to mention that it was made here as a piece of legal casuistry. Nonetheless, it was indicative of the Jews' improbable civil status.[99]

Jews also defended themselves by enhancing their self-image, buoying up sagging spirits through resort to the long-cherished device of a story that inverts the norm. Such a story might also be true, including that of a kidnapping in which the Jewish victim eludes the Church's grasp – most notably that of Anna del Monte, who in May of 1749 was kidnapped into the Roman House of Converts, where, to use her own word, she was "incarcerated" for thirteen days, but emerged still a Jew. Anna, who, as we learn from a census of the ghetto prepared in 1733, was born in 1732 and died shortly before 1779, did not convert; her name would otherwise appear in the House of Converts register. We know her story by way of a "diary" she wrote from memory shortly after returning to the ghetto. The text, however, was later amplified and perhaps restructured (in Anna's name) by her brother Tranquillo, a central communal leader, who began to

[98] David de Pomis, *Ennaratio apologica* (Venice, 1588); De Pomis is cited in Stow, *Catholic Thought*, 220–4, who is actually citing Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, 5, 20.

[99] See Stow, "Equality under law," 325.

circulate the text – publishing would have brought certain punishment – only in 1793. In these additions, the cardinal vice regent of Rome apologizes to Anna for her sufferings, and much is made of the joyous greeting accorded Anna as she entered her family home. Yet we have already noted that girls like Anna often remained alone and unmarried, for fear they had promised to have future offspring baptized; indeed, the motif of the happy return may have been borrowed from a similar story about an unnamed Jewish woman from Cuneo, reported by none other than Giuseppe Sessa. As for the Vice Regent's apology, it reminds us of the invented tales of prelates defending Jews in ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah.* Circulating the edited diary in the wake of the siege of the Roman ghetto in 1793, when, four years into the French Revolution, Roman Jews were accused of siding with the Jacobins, Tranquillo was broadcasting a message that united protest with hope. He may have also been chiding fellow Jews for "anchoring" young women like his sister. Yet he was also repeating what Jews knew to be true. Tales of virtually forced baptisms in the various Case dei catecumeni in northern Italy, such as in Turin or Venice (there were no Jews in the south after 1541), reveal much about the forces operating on the Jews at this time, both within the Church and outside. In Turin and Piedmont, in particular, the fate of those "offered" demonstrably depended on the relations between the Curia in Rome and Piedmontese authorities.[100]

Stories like that of Anna betray enormous frustration. Jews understood perfectly well that the kidnappings were rooted in legal interpretation, not disregard for older privileges. Rather than rely on these privileges to seek a victim's freedom, here, too, Jews sought help from lawyers skilled in *ius commune.* The distinguished Carlo Luti made appeals that went to the heart of difficult questions like the possession of *patria potestas*, arguing that this right belonged exclusively to real parents or the guardians named in a will. These appeals, however, were blocked time and again in briefs drawn up by papal jurists, who invariably resorted to the *canon law* principle of *favor fidei.* Their positions, with rare exceptions, carried the day.

Eighteenth-century Catholic clergy, convinced that they and their faith were the sole repository of divine truth, reacted with what can only be called a loss of proportion as they witnessed this conviction being challenged, as it was daily, in a world that was growing increasingly "alien."

[100] See Allegra, *Identità in bilico*, ch. 1, *passim*. On Anna del Monte in the 1733 census, see Angela Groppi, ed., *Gli abitanti del ghetto* (Rome, 2015). See now Kenneth Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo: Catholic Anxiety and Jewish Protest in the Age of Revolutions* (New Haven, 2016).

They set out "to enlighten" those who were still living in what they considered "the dark," devoting themselves to realizing the words of the messianically interpreted verse John 10:16: "there shall be one flock and one pastor." And they found reassurance that this goal would be achieved in each individual conversion – regardless of the motivation or the methods employed.

Reflecting on the sum of papal actions toward Jews in the period we have been observing, motivated by the precedents of Benedict XIII, Trent, and the thinking of Zasius and his ilk, something rings false in the judgment of the mid-nineteenth-century Frederic Pierre Comte de Falloux, who wrote of "Jewish cruelty" and the Dominican Pope Pius V's "salutary repressive actions."[101] Consciousness of the true import of papal Jewry policy was clearly in the eye of the beholder.

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[101] The Count based this judgment, in Le Comte de Falloux, *Histoire de Saint Pie V Pape* (Paris, 1851), 144, on the earlier opinions of *Vita Pio Quinti* by Girolamo Catena in 1647 (repr. 1712), 52–6, and the identically named *Vita* by Paolo Alessandro Maffei published in 1712, 487.

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CHAPTER 2

JUDAISM AND PROTESTANTISM

R. PO-CHIA HSIA

JUDAISM AND THE GERMAN REFORMATION

Judaism was central to the self-definition and identity of the Protestant Reformation. Like the "papists" he attacked, Jews were, for the German reformer Martin Luther, worshippers of "dead letters," obsessed with empty rituals and commandments, but devoid of the holy spirit. But while excoriating idolaters, heretics, and unbelievers in the same breath, Luther conceded that Jews were descendants of the Chosen People, whose covenant with God foreshadowed the pact of redemption offered through Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Herein lay the paradox in the cultural relations between Protestants and Jews: in abrogating to themselves the mantle of New Israel, the new Chosen People, what role was left for the Jews by the Protestants? In the history of early modern Protestantism, this paradox developed simultaneously in two opposite directions: in a philosemitic enthusiasm for evangelization among the Jews, as well as in a renewed rejection of Judaism. The three decades between Luther's challenge to the papacy (1517) and his death (1546) represented the crucial period in this development.

After the Second World War and the Holocaust, scholars of Luther and the Reformation felt an urgent need to re-examine the reformer's legacy on antisemitism, in view of the Nazi appropriation of Luther's anti-Jewish writings and the antisemitic attitude of a large part of the established Protestant Church.[1] Interestingly, this soul-searching came initially from Lutheran Churches outside of Germany, an example being the booklet written by the English Church historian and Luther biographer E. Gordon Rupp.[2] The quincentennial celebration of Luther's birth in 1983 also gave

[1] See Christopher J. Probst, *Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington, 2012).

[2] E. Gordon Rupp, *Martin Luther and the Jews* (London, 1972).

impetus to a serious interfaith dialog,[3] as well as historical re-evaluations. While English-language scholarship is well represented by the work of Mark Edwards and Olaf Roynesdal, it is curious that a Dutch Calvinist, the late Heiko A. Oberman, professor of Church History at Tübingen University, penned the most impressive scholarship on the topic in German.[4] While acknowledging the deep anti-Jewish prejudices in the late medieval Christian Church and in the early Reformation, Oberman made a sharp distinction between theological anti-Judaism and racial antisemitism, warning his readers not to draw a too facile connection between Luther and Hitler. Reflecting a new direction in Protestant scholarship, Oberman's interpretation places Luther's anti-Jewish writings in the eschatological battle between Good and Evil. This interpretive strategy, and the publication of *Wurzeln des Antisemitismus*, allows the Jewish issue, as it were, to be bracketed out and no longer addressed separately in Oberman's 1982 magisterial biography of the reformer.[5] It is not that German scholars have shied away from an unpleasant past, for there is plenty of good scholarship on the social, cultural, and economic history of Jewry in the Holy Roman Empire. The diffidence lies rather in the reluctance by German Protestant Church historians to confront an embarrassment in the life of their hero-founder and in the history of their own church.[6]

Indeed, no one embodied the ambivalence toward Jews more vividly than Luther himself. While the reformer shared in the many medieval Christian prejudices against Jews, he attempted to overcome traditional anti-Judaism in the early years of his career. Hoping for a rapid spread of the evangelical message among Jews, Luther wrote a compassionate

[3] *Lutheranism and the Jews: A Record of the Second Consultation between Representatives of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation and the Lutheran World Federation held in Stockholm, Sweden, 11–13 July, 1983* (Geneva, 1984).

[4] In Mark U. Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics 1531–46* (Ithaca, NY, 1983), Luther's anti-Jewish polemic is analyzed in conjunction with the reformer's attacks on Catholics and Anabaptists. See also Olaf Roynesdal, "Martin Luther and the Jews" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 1986); and Heiko A. Oberman, *Wurzeln des Antisemitismus* (Berlin, 1981).

[5] Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther. Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel* (Berlin, 1982).

[6] For an example of this burdensome self-reflection on the part of a German Protestant Church historian, see Thomas Kaufmann, "Luther and the Jews," in Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett, eds., *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Leiden, 2006), 69–104. In comparison, there is no hesitation on the part of Jewish scholars to study the theological and religious part of the Christian–Christian encounter; see, for example, Daniel Tollet, ed., *Les Textes judéophobes et judéophiles dans l'Europe chrétienne à l'époque moderne* (Paris, 2000), and the volume above edited by Bell and Burnett.

pamphlet in 1523 entitled "That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew." In this tract, Luther excoriated past Christian persecutions of Jews that were born out of ignorance and superstitions. He even exclaimed that, if he were a Jew, he would never have converted.[7] There is nothing in this early treatise on the medieval Christian beliefs that Jews committed host desecration or ritual murders, but plenty of attacks on "papist superstitions." By offering the banner of Christ, the religion of the spirit, Luther hoped that the Jews, brethren of Jesus in the flesh, would join evangelical Christians as brethren of the Gospels in the spirit. A strong undercurrent of Christian millenarianism, with its vision of the end of the world, the conversion of the Jews, and the Second Coming of Christ, underlay this early philosemitism in Luther's writings.

Christian eschatological hopes for the conversion of Jews were manifest in the immediate years before the Reformation. In the years 1507–9, a Jewish convert, Johannes Pfefferkorn, alleged that many Jewish writings contained profanities against Christianity and urged the confiscation of Hebrew books in an effort to coerce his former coreligionists to abandon their faith. This measure was strongly opposed by the leading Christian Hebrew scholar, the lawyer Johannes Reuchlin, who reaped scorn for his effort. Conversely, Reuchlin argued that the study of Hebrew books was crucial to the emergent humanistic scholarship in the Holy Roman Empire; the conversion of Jews, however desirable, had to come from persuasion, not coercion.[8]

The Jews, of course, failed to convert. Jewish leaders in the Holy Roman Empire, such as Jossel of Rosheim, viewed the Christian schism with caution, and even welcomed the split among the *goyim* as perhaps a sign of the delivery of the Jewish people. Meanwhile, Judaism and Jewishness became central metaphors in the increasingly bitter and bloody conflict between the evangelical movement and supporters of the Roman Church. Time and again, Catholics accused reformers of Jewish sympathies. For example, a Christian Hebraist, Johannes Böschenstain, published a pamphlet in 1521 defending his honor against the charge that he was a Jewish convert. This libel arose because Böschenstain was an early and

[7] "Dass Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sei," in *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar, 1883–), I, Abt. 2. *Werke* hereafter cited as *WA*.

[8] For some examples of recent scholarship on the Reuchlin Affair, see Arno Herzig, Julius H. Schoeps, and Saskia Rohde, eds., *Reuchlin und die Juden* (Sigmaringen, 1993); *Johannes Reuchlin, "Recommendation Whether to Confiscate, Destroy and Burn All Jewish Books. A Classic Treatise against Antisemitism,"* trans. Peter Wortsman (Mahwah, NJ, 2000); R. Po-chia Hsia, "Die Konversion der Juden zur Zeit Reuchlins," in Daniela Hacke and Bernd Roeck, eds., *Die Welt im Augenspiegel – Johannes Reuchlin und seine Zeit* (Stuttgart, 2002), 161–8.

strong supporter of the evangelical movement; and the name Böschenstain, a village in Swabia, happened to be the home of a small Jewish community. In fact, the label of "Jew-lover" was attached to the Hebrew scholar Böschenstain some years before the Reformation. In 1514, Böschenstain wrote to the great humanist Johannes Reuchlin, expressing his sympathy and support in Reuchlin's polemic with the Jewish convert Johannes Pfefferkorn, and lamenting that: "I was deeply hated – by the Jews because I could read their writings and by Christians because I conversed with [Jews.]"[9] The case of Böschenstain shows the continuity between the Reuchlin Affair of the early 1510s and the "Luther Affair" of the later part of the same decade: in both incidents, their opponents tried to tarnish the causes of Reuchlin and Luther with Jewish association. While rumors circulated that Reuchlin received a huge bribe from Jews for resisting the confiscation of Hebrew writings, Luther and his supporters were often accused of "Judaizing" by defenders of the Roman Church.

The rapid radical turn in the evangelical movement implied that Luther had only a partial control over developing events and that he was keenly aware of the danger of being labeled a Judaizer. The Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster in 1534–5 was a case in point. During 1533, the Reform movement in the north German episcopal city of Münster took a radical turn. Having ousted the Catholics from power and abolished the Catholic mass, civic and religious leaders proclaimed Münster's loyalty to the Protestant cause. So far, this model of urban reform conformed to the pattern witnessed in many German cities. However, further radicalization in Reform theology led to the acceptance of Anabaptist ideas – that the only valid Christian baptism was adult and not infant baptism, and that the true Christian community, based on faith, comprised only a selected minority of the elect – and the eventual split within the Reform camp. After the supporters of Luther were driven out, civic and religious leaders proclaimed Münster a New Israel. They reorganized the community of the elect according to the model of the Hebrew Scriptures, with prophetic leadership and twelve tribes. This theocratic experiment ended in the institution of an Anabaptist "Israelite" kingship, with Jan of Leiden, the leader of the Anabaptists, proclaimed a second King David, and with the introduction of polygamy in the style of the ancient Israelites. The Münster Anabaptist Kingdom shocked public opinion, and mobilized both Catholic and Protestant princes to crush the community. The Protestants were faced with a huge embarrassment, as Catholics smugly explained that this theocratic Judaic-Christian experiment represented the inevitable outcome of the Protestant Reformation. Forced

[9] Böschenstain's letter, dated June 2, 1514, is published in Ludwig Geiger, ed., *Johann Reuchlins Briefwechsel* (Tübingen, 1875), 216.

onto the defensive, Protestants published their own polemic against the Anabaptist: Urbanus Rhegius, an associate of Luther, composed a treatise attacking Münster as an act of Judaic-Christian sedition and defending the Protestant Reformation against the charges of Judaizing.[10]

Further fuel for the fire of Protestant–Catholic polemic was furnished by the controversy over alleged Jewish ritual murders. In 1540, in the village of Sappenfeld, a ritual-murder trial resulted in the executions of Jews in the diocese of Eichstätt by its bishop. A supporting argument against the Jews cited the earlier 1529 Poesing trial, in which the Jews were alleged to have used the blood of a Christian child to anoint their rabbi; thirty Hungarian Jews suffered martyrdom. In the 1540 defense, two Sulzbach Jews published an anonymous manuscript written by a Christian in support of their accused brethren. The authorship of this booklet, *Whether it is true and believable that Jews secretly kill Christian children and use their blood. A splendid text presented for everyone's judgment*, soon came to light: it came from the pen of Andreas Osiander, the leading Protestant reformer in the imperial city of Nuremberg. While explaining the blood libel by reference to Christian superstitions, Osiander laid the blame for past anti-Jewish persecutions squarely on the Catholic clergy:

> The accusation of ritual murder first appeared two or three hundred years ago, when monks and priests instituted all sorts of roguery and deceit, with pilgrimages and other false miracles, when they openly fooled and deceived Christians. Precisely because the Jews knew the Scriptures better than they did, the monks and priests singled them out as objects of hatred and persecution. But God would not allow the Jews to be exterminated for the good of Christianity, and through the Hebrew language Christians have once again come to a correct understanding of their faith. These Jew-haters are equally capable of inventing lies against Christians, whom they call Lutherans.[11]

Osiander's defense of the Jews provoked a furious response from the Catholic side. *Refutation of a Jewish Booklet*, composed by Johann Eck, the leading Catholic opponent of Luther, poured scorn on Jews and Protestants. After defending the historical veracity of alleged ritual murders, Eck raged at Osiander's denial of the blood libel, for it undermined the entire theological foundation of the Christian idea of sacrifice and redemption. Eck slandered

[10] *Widderlegung der Münsterischen newen Valentinianer vnd Donatisten bekentnus / an die Christen in Osnabrugk /inn Westfalen /durch D. Urbanum Regium mit einer Vorrhede Doctor Martini Luthers* (Wittenberg, 1535).

[11] [Andreas Osiander], *Ob es war vnd glaublich sey / dass die juden der Christen kinder heymlich erwürgen / vnd ir blut gebrauchen / ein treffenliche schrifft / auff eines yeden vrteyl gestellt* [1540]. Republished by Moritz Stern, *Andreas Osianders Schrift über die Blutbeschuldigung* (Kiel, 1893).

the composer of the tract as "the father of Jews [Judenvater]," who has taken bribes from them. He also attacked Luther's doctrine of salvation by faith alone and for insisting the study of Hebrew was essential for recovering the true Christian faith. Not only did Protestants stir up popular rebellions, Lutherans and Jews were allies in the war against the true Church: the Lutheran desecration of the sacrament of the Eucharist was similar to Jewish host desecrations. In conclusion, Eck accused the iconoclasts of the Reformation of having learned from the Jews.[12]

Not all reformers were sympathetic to the Jews, as Eck charged; some were implacable foes of Jews from the beginning. The positive writings of Osiander and the early Luther regarding Jews have to be balanced against the figures of Balthasar Hubmaier and Martin Bucer. Preacher at the cathedral in Regensburg, the still-Catholic cleric Hubmaier lashed out from the pulpit against Jewish moneylending, and played a key role in the 1519 expulsion of the Jewish community from that imperial city. He later embraced the radical Reformation and was beheaded as an Anabaptist in 1529. Unlike Luther, the leading reformer in Strasbourg, Martin Bucer, never expected the Jews to convert to the Protestant cause. In 1539 Bucer published his memorandum to Philip of Hesse, a leading Protestant prince, in which the reformer urged the prince to protect the purity of the newly reformed Christian community. Jewish usury and blasphemies, Bucer argued, were harming the Christian community; expulsion would be the ideal measure. After the publication of Bucer's tract, Jewish leaders were greatly agitated and claimed that the Catholics were better than the Protestants. They also influenced Philip of Hesse not to rescind toleration for Jewish communities in his principality. Enraged by their opposition, Bucer called Jews enemies of Christ, alongside papists and Turks. In fact, Bucer argued, Jews and Catholics were comparable, both having a stubborn priestly caste, concerned only with ceremonies and external observances and not with the heart.[13]

This context of deep Protestant ambivalence and increasing antagonism toward Jews, as the Reformation unfolded and as Judaism became a topic of polemic between Protestants and Catholics, is important in understanding Luther's anti-Jewish writings in the last years of his career. Not only did the Jews not come to the evangelical fold, but as early as the late 1520s a handful of radical Protestants, who took the Hebrew Scripture literally, imitated the

[12] Johannes Eck, *Ains Judenbüchlins Verlegung: darin ain Christ / gantzer Christenhait zu schmach / will es geschehe den Juden unrecht in bezichtigung der Christen kinder mordt* (Ingolstadt, 1541).

[13] Martin Bucer, *Von den Juden ob / vn wie die under den Christen zu halten sind / ein Rathschlag / durch die gelerten am ended is buchlins verziechnet / zugericht* (Kassel, 1539), C1–2.

ceremonies of the Jews, as Luther bitterly complained.[14] By the early 1540s, when the Protestant Reformation encountered stiffened Catholic opposition, Luther drew the logical conclusion from his frustration: despite their blood affinity with the historical Jesus, the obstinate Jews had rejected the true Gospels – hence, they, too, would be rejected by the Reformation. In two vitriolic tracts published in 1543, *On the Ineffable Name* (*Von Schem Hamphoras*) and *On the Jews and Their Lies*, Luther vented his fury in listing the litany of crimes ascribed by medieval Christians to the Jews. Idolatrous and superstitious, the Jews were blind believers in the false religion of the flesh; their beliefs killed the living spirit of the evangelical faith:

> And if I had not had experience with my papists, it would have been impossible for me to believe, that such evil people could exist on earth, who knowingly oppose the open, known truth, that is, to oppose God himself in his face. I should have seen such hardened feelings not in the heart of men, but only in the heart of the devil. But now, I do not wonder, neither about the Turks nor the Jews, about their blindness, hardness, wickedness, because I see them in the most holy fathers of the church, in the popes, cardinals, and bishops.[15]

Working himself up to a rhetorical frenzy, Luther urged godly magistrates to burn synagogues and expel the Jews from their territories. While the vehemence of Luther's language contrasted sharply with the sympathetic tones of the two reformers Andreas Osiander and Justus Jonas, it found broad resonance in the evangelical Church. Philip Melanchthon, the reformer's younger associate at the University of Wittenberg and his leading supporter, agreed with Luther's harsh restrictions on Jewish toleration and rejected their claim to be God's Chosen. Nonetheless, Melanchthon did advocate Jewish toleration, due to his optimism for Jewish conversion, and also to his formative years, when he studied under Reuchlin, the defender of Hebrew books and the Jewish people.[16] Embarrassed as some might have felt at Luther's vitriol, these writings would burden the relations between the new Lutheran Church and the Jews in the following centuries, as we will see later in this chapter.

JUDAISM AND THE REFORMED CHURCH

In contrast to Luther, the French reformer John Calvin met few Jews in his life and devoted little in his writings to the Jews and their religion. Consequently, the scholarship on Calvin and the Jews, again unlike the

[14] *WA*, I, Abt. 53, p. 614.
[15] "Von den Juden und ihren Lügen," *WA*, I, Abt. 53, p. 449.
[16] Timothy J. Wengert, "Philip Melanchthon and the Jews: A Reappraisal," in Bell and Burnett, eds., *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation*, 105–36.

historiography on Luther and the Jews, is very limited.[17] Nevertheless, Calvin's teachings on the Law, his predilection for the Hebrew Testaments, and his teachings on moneylending would influence the relationship between the Reformed Church and Jewry in a generally more positive development than that in Lutheran Germany. The absence of Lutheran anti-Jewish polemic partly accounted for this difference; another reason was the relatively unburdened situation of Christian–Jewish relations in the countries where the followers of Calvin gained ascendancy – Switzerland, Scotland, England, the Low Countries, France, and Transylvania – for the obvious reason that in these regions, unlike German-speaking central Europe, no Jewish communities had been tolerated since the Middle Ages. A third reason is to be found in Calvin's theology of double election. It refers to the general election by which Abraham and his descendants were chosen by God, and the particular or secret election by which individuals, responding to the message of Christ, gained salvation by faith.

If we compare the writings of Luther and Calvin, with the notable exception of Luther's polemical anti-Jewish writings, there is little to distinguish between their teachings regarding faith in Christ as the sole source of salvation for both Christians and Jews. For both reformers, redemption came only through accepting Jesus as the messiah, whose person fulfilled the unity of the old and new covenants. Therefore, although the Jews had once had the privilege of being God's firstborn, insofar as they had not accepted Christ as the messiah, they had forfeited their special status. As Calvin wrote in his *Commentary on Deuteronomy* (10:15-17):

> For when the Jews, inflated with the title of the Church, rejected the Gospel, the faith of the simple was shaken, by the consideration that it was improbable that Christ, and the salvation promised through him, could possibly be rejected by an elect people, a holy nation, and the genuine sons of God. Here, therefore, Paul contends that not all who descend from Jacob, according to the flesh, are true Israelites, because God, of his own good pleasure, may choose whom he will, as heirs of eternal salvation.

Nevertheless, Calvin's doctrine of double election offered a more favorable scenario for Jews. Although the descendants of Abraham had lost their status as the Chosen People, individual Jews could still be counted among the New

[17] A useful place to start is the short article by Salo W. Baron on "John Calvin" in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Detroit, 2007). In addition to the monograph by Jack H. Robinson, *John Calvin and the Jews* (New York, 1992), see also Pierre-François Moreau, "Calvin, le peuple hébreu et la continuité des deux Testaments," in Tollet, ed., *Les Textes judéophobes et judéophiles*, 85–96.

Israel. Calvin wrote in his *Commentary on Romans*: "In the end, God's covenant remains valid also for the physical descendants of Abraham, certainly only for those who have been predestined by God's free election."[18] In other words, the Jews, descendants of Abraham, still enjoyed the benefits of a double election, despite the fact that most of them had rejected Jesus as the messiah. In his *Commentary on Zechariah* (1:17), Calvin wrote:

> Whenever we read that God had repudiated his own people, it is certain, as Paul says, that the calling of God is without repentance (Romans 11:29) nor does he declare this only of the secret election for each, but also of that general election, by which God had set apart the race of Abraham from the reprobates, as he instances in the case of Esau and of others: yet the election of God was unchangeable; and hence it was that there remained still some hope as to that people, that God would at length gather to himself a Church from the Jews as well as from the gentiles, so that those who were then separated might be hereafter united together.[19]

Unlike Luther in Saxony, where there were small Jewish communities, Calvin only encountered Jews during his exile from France. He would have encountered a large Sephardic and Ashkenazic community in Ferrara in 1536; and it is documented that he befriended the Jewish convert Immanuel Tremellius, securing a position as professor of Hebrew at the Genevan Academy for the latter, who later translated the Genevan Catechism into Hebrew.[20] Calvin was certainly aware of Luther's harsh polemic against the Jews. In 1543, during Calvin's second sojourn in Strasbourg, the city council decided against reprinting Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* due to its inflammatory rhetoric. Although there is no documentation of Calvin's reaction to this treatise, it seems that Calvin was consistently negative about Judaism and about Jews, as long as the latter were not converted. In his sermons, Calvin characterized Jews as "a barbarous nation" and "profane, unholy, sacrilegious dogs."[21] Toward the end of his life in 1561, Calvin expressed this dismissive remark about Jews: "I have had much conversation with many Jews: I have never seen either a drop of piety or a grain of truth or ingenuousness – nay, I have never found common sense in any Jew."[22]

[18] Cited in Herman J. Selderhuis, ed., *The Calvin Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2009), 145.

[19] For Calvin's interpretation of the crucial passages in Romans 9–11, see Robinson, *Calvin and the Jews*, 69–81.

[20] Selderhuis, ed., *The Calvin Handbook*, 143–4.

[21] Calvin, "Sermon on Micah (4:10b–11)," in *Supplementa Calviniana Sermons inédits*, ed. Erwin Mülhaupt (Neukirchen, 1936–) V, 145, 10, and "Sermon on Galatians, (1:6–8)," in *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, 59 vols. (Brunswick, 1863–1900), L, 307. Cited in Selderhuis, ed., *The Calvin Handbook*, 145.

[22] *Commentary on Daniel* 2:44, cited in Selderhuis, ed., *The Calvin Handbook*, p. 145.

CHRISTIAN HEBRAISM

Christian scholarship of Hebrew dated back to the interest in the recovery of Antiquity in Renaissance humanism. Despite the keen interest in the Kabbalah by noted Christian Hebraists such as Pico della Mirandola and Johannes Reuchlin, the primary interest in the Christian world was to acquire the ability to read the Hebrew Scriptures in the original language. The first professorships of Hebrew were founded before the Reformation, in 1508 at Alcalá in Spain, in 1520 at Louvain in the Spanish Netherlands, followed in 1536 by the Regius Professorships of Hebrew at Cambridge and Oxford, and the chair of Hebrew at the Collège de France. But it was the Protestant Reformation, especially the Reformed Church, which gave a strong impetus to the growth of Christian Hebraism.

The centrality of the Bible revolutionized the education of the new Protestant clergy. Biblical studies, in the original languages, became new requirements in the formation of the Protestant pastorate. New chairs of Hebrew were endowed at Protestant universities; and the knowledge of Hebrew and rabbinic scholarship came to be expected of professors of the Old Testament. Many of the earliest teachers of Hebrew were Jewish converts, such as Anton Margaritha, son of the chief rabbi of Regensburg and a convert to Lutheranism, the author of the first major ethnographic work on Jewish ceremonies and folkways, *Der gantz Iüdisch Glaub* (1530). Native-born Christian Hebraists, such as the Lutheran Sebastian Münster, employed their knowledge mainly for polemical purposes. However, a strong tradition of Christian Hebraic scholarship was emerging during the second half of the sixteenth century, and it bore a firm Calvinist imprint.

The central figure was the German Calvinist Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629), professor of Hebrew at the University of Basel. He was the first Christian scholar, Protestant or Catholic, who used extensively the Talmud, works by Joseph Karo, and Yiddish halakhic literature. He made three main contributions. First, Buxtorf established the foundation for the Christian study of the Hebrew Scriptures by providing a standard grammar, his *Thesaurus grammaticus linguae sanctae hebraeae* (1609). Second, Buxtorf demonstrated the importance of the rabbinic interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. In 1618–19, he edited the Basel rabbinical Bible, with masoretic notes, Targums, and biblical commentaries. And finally, in his 1603 work, *De synagoga judaica (Juden Schul)*, Buxtorf provided for Christian Europe the standard ethnography of the religious rituals and folk customs of the Jewish communities of his time.

De synagoga judaica was not the first work to introduce Jewish religious and cultural practices to the Christian world. We have

mentioned earlier *Der gantz Iüdisch Glaub* (1530) by Anton Margaritha. Two decades before that, the convert Johannes Pfefferkorn had provided a first glimpse of contemporary Jewish cultural life, albeit in a work marred by his ignorance of Hebrew and by his strong bent for conversion. In contrast, Margaritha, the son of Rabbi Jacob Margolis, whom Reuchlin had consulted concerning the Kabbalah, and who was fully conversant in rabbinic studies, turned his knowledge against Judaism and towards the cause of Lutheran conversion. The intention of composing *Der gantz Iüdisch Glaub*, in Margaritha's words, was to depict the ceremonies, prayers, and customs of the Jews based on their own books; he wanted to expose the "false beliefs" of the Jews and to show how they curse the Holy Roman Empire and Christians in their liturgy. Margaritha's ultimate goal was the conversion of his fellow brethren to the new faith, which he himself had accepted. The main body of the book consists of a German translation of the liturgy and prayers used by the Ashkenazim, spiced with extensive commentaries on the history and meanings of Jewish feasts, ceremonies, and customs, lengthy diatribes against usury and rabbinic authority, and a cornucopia of anecdotes and descriptions of contemporary German Jewish communal life. Since it was written in German, the impact of *Der gantz Iüdisch Glaub* was restricted to Lutheran Germany: the six editions were all published in Lutheran cities – three in Frankfurt, two in Augsburg, and one in Leipzig; its influence seemed to have waned after 1561, with only two more editions in 1689 and 1713.

In comparison, Buxtorf's *De synagoga judaica* enjoyed an international reputation, especially in Protestant Europe, mainly due to its objective scholarship and the avoidance of anti-Jewish polemic. In documenting the ritual and cultural practices of the Jews, Buxtorf cited extensively passages from the Talmud and rabbinic commentaries, as well as from the halakhic writings of his time. As a Calvinist, Buxtorf naturally believed in the veracity of Reformed Christianity, as opposed to the errors of Judaism, constructed on the basis of the Talmud and not the Hebrew Scriptures, as Buxtorf argued. The gist of Buxtorf's work, as well as that of the other Christian ethnographies, was to convey to Christian readers a largely accurate and matter-of-fact description of Judaism. There were no mentions of well poisonings, host desecrations, and ritual murders in these works of Christian ethnography: Buxtorf and others had de-mythologized Jewish rituals, representing them as cumbersome and fastidious, rather than as demonic and murderous. If there was one thing Protestants learned from Buxtorf, it was that superstitions and external ceremonies abound in Jewish life; and Judaism hurt no one but the Jews themselves.

Between 1603 and 1750, Buxtorf's *De synagoga judaica* was reprinted five times in German, and was translated into Latin, Dutch, and English, appearing altogether in nineteen editions. This book "helped shape ethnographic discussions of Jewish life throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, serving as a source of explanations for Jewish customs and occasionally as a substitute for first-hand observations."[23] Buxtorf set a milestone in the Protestant understanding of Judaism and Jewish folkways, and it served as a model for the major German Protestant works on Judaism in the eighteenth century: Johann Jacob Schudt's *Jüdisches Merckwürdigkeiten* (1714–17) and Johann Andreas Eisenmenger's *Entdecktes Judenthum* (1700). By rendering Judaism "harmless" for Christianity, Buxtorf's work also had major policy implications for Protestant authorities and reinforced the willingness for the toleration of Jews in territories under the Reformed Church.

Thanks to the Calvinist emphasis on Hebrew studies, Reformed Protestantism dominated Christian Hebraic scholarship during the seventeenth century. In Basel, Buxtorf was succeeded by his son Johannes Buxtorf II (1599–1664), who followed his father not only as professor of Theology at the university, but also in continuing the production and sale of Hebrew books with Jewish publishers and correctors. In addition to maintaining the literary fame of his father through revised editions of his work, Buxtorf II himself specialized in the study of rabbinic literature, publishing Latin translations of writings by Maimonides and Judah ha-Levi. Calvinist domination of Christian Hebraica was not limited to the Swiss Confederation; other centers included the University of Leiden in the new Dutch Republic, and the Huguenot Academy of Saumur. In the latter place, Louis Cappel (1585–1658) emerged as the leading Hebraist, whose major work, *Critica sacra* (1650), goes beyond biblical scholarship to study the vowel points and accents of the Masoretic text. In arguing that the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible was susceptible to change, corruption, and human interference, Cappel cast into doubt the inviolability of biblical authority. The career of Cappel and his Leiden colleague, Constantijn L'Empereur (1591–1648), showed how far Christian Hebraic studies had progressed beyond the first focus on the Hebrew Bible. Both scholars specialized in the study of rabbinic literature, and both men advanced from professorships of Hebrew in the faculty of arts to the more prestigious (and better-paid) chairs of Theology at their respective academies.

[23] Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden, 1996), 85.

Christian Hebraica reflected a specific development of scholarship within a broader Christian engagement with Judaism in sixteenth-century Europe; the Protestant Reformation, with its emphasis on Bible reading, also encouraged general curiosity about Jewish history. Both movements led to a rush of interest in the Jews, ancient and contemporary, which was reflected in the printing press in the Holy Roman Empire, the center of publishing and the book trade. Histories of the Israelites published in the first decades of the sixteenth century ranged over the entire cultural spectrum, from illustrated short chapbooks in German to longer Latin texts. *Der dreien Glauben* (1518), an illustrated chapbook, offered the curious reader portraits of 'good and bad Jews' from the Old Testament. More highbrow was Bartholomaeus Stenus's *Ducum, Iudicum, Regum, Israhelitici populi cum ex sacristum prophanis literis hystorica methodus* (1523), which was a short digest of Old Testament history. In the middle of this cultural milieu, we could find a title such as Kaspar Turnauer's *Von dem Jüdischen unnd Israelistischen Volck unnd jren Vorgeern* (1528), which was sold out quickly. Taking its place in the book market and in response to popular demand, *Das Buch der Altveter, des Israelitischen Volcks, nemlich, woher die Synagog, das volck Gottes, oder die Kirche, jren ursprung habe* was published in 1536 by Wolfgang Russ, a Lutheran pastor. As Russ explains in his preface, he composed the book because Turnauer had quickly gone out of print and there was a large demand for a new book on the subject of Jewish history.

As the titles of these books indicate, their popularity did not come from an inherent interest in Ashkenazic Jewry; instead, they served as historic and ethnographic mirrors for the new Protestant Germany. In perusing the history of the Israelites, Protestants, especially Lutherans, pondered over the rise and fall of the first Chosen People and God's wrath and mercy. The demise of the Kingdom of Israel served as admonition to Protestants to hold fast in the intensifying struggle between the Christian confessions. Nothing demonstrated this sentiment more clearly than the book published by the mystic Christian Hohburg (1607–75),[24] a forerunner of German Pietism, who lamented the sufferings of the Protestants in the midst of the Thirty Years' War. A dissident Lutheran pastor in Lüneburg and Hamburg, Hohburg became for some years a Calvinist preacher in Gelders and the Netherlands before crossing once more the confessional

[24] In spite of his voluminous writings, there is practically no scholarship on this important precursor of Pietism. See Evamarie Gröschel-Willberg, "Christian Hoburg und Joachim Betke: Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte der deutschen Pietismus" (D.Phil. diss., Erlangen, 1955). There is a published biography of Hohburg by his son, Philipp Hohburg, *Lebens-Lauff des seeligen Christian Hoburg* (1694).

boundaries in Protestantism and dying as preacher to the Mennonites in Altoona, a suburb of Hamburg with broad religious toleration, where a community of Sephardic Jews had also settled.[25]

Hohburg described his 1644 book *Teutsch-Evangelisches Judenthum* as:

> truthfully presented from the holy prophets of God, that we Evangelical Christians in the greater part of Germany are now like the Jewish people of the Old Testament: 1. In receiving God's good deeds. 2. In our overwhelming sins. 3. In the general misery of the land. 4. In the general signs amidst this misery. 5. In the merciful outcome of these events amidst the true counsel and suggestions from the Almighty, as presented by the holy prophets, showing our path to damnation in this fruitful treatise in order that the present almost Jewish Christendom in Germany may be awakened from the sleep of hypocrisy and security, and that this may be an earnest mirror for repentance in these angry times, that everyone may hope for peace.[26]

Hohburg argued for an exact parallel between the ancient Israelites and German Protestants. Once, both peoples enjoyed God's favor: just as God had led the Israelites out of Egyptian Captivity, he also led the Protestants out of the Babylonian Captivity of the Roman Church; just as God had helped kings Abia and Assa in the Hebrew Scriptures, he also helped the Protestants to withstand the onslaught of Charles V and Philip II. In Hohburg's words: "'I acknowledge only you out of all the peoples on earth,' God spoke to the Jewish people, therefore God also acknowledges us evangelical Germans with great love and mercy."[27] But the German Protestants had sinned just as the Jews had sinned. Consequently, the Evangelical Church must suffer the same punishments as the Jewish Church. The fact that foreign troops were overrunning Germany was a sign of God's wrath, just as he had allowed the Syrians to conquer the Jews. The only outcome from the slaughter of the Thirty Years' War, Hohburg warned his readers, was a replay of Jewish history: only a small part of the ancient Israelites were pious and God saved them; similarly, God would save only a small group of pious German Protestants and destroy the great majority of godless hypocrites.

The son of a weaver, Christian Hohburg worked as a schoolteacher and village pastor in Wolfenbüttel and Lüneburg. His prophetic stance (and his lack of a university education) got him into trouble with established Lutheran clerical hierarchies. Repeatedly censored and expelled, Hohburg ended up in Amsterdam, before he was invited by Mennonites

[25] For the Jewish and Christian dissident communities in the Greater Hamburg area, see Joachim Whaley, *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg, 1529–1819* (Cambridge, 1985).

[26] Christian Hohburg, *Teutsch-Evangelisches Judenthum* (1644), 1–9. [27] Ibid., 12.

in Hamburg to serve their community. A figure who straddled Lutheran, Calvinist, and Mennonite communities, Hohburg's views of Jews and Judaism were strongly influenced by his eschatology. But if his treatise sounded a *rapprochement* between pious Jews and true Protestants, other writers firmly asserted the inviolable boundary between the Old and New Israel.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Appended to Justus Jonas's Latin translation of Luther's *Dass Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sei* was a letter by Luther to the converted Jew Bernhard, which expressed the hope that the effort to convert Jews would proceed at the rapid pace of the evangelical movement. While mass conversions of Jews failed to materialize, individual Jews did embrace the new Protestant faith. However, the confrontation between the different Christian confessions made the crossing of religious boundaries even more haphazard for Jewish converts.[28] The experience of Johannes Isaac (d. 1577) and Stephen (1542–97), father and son, was a case in point.

Together with his four-year-old son, Johannes converted in Hesse to the new Protestant faith in 1546 and received the protection of Philip of Hesse, the powerful Protestant prince. But after the defeat of Philip in the Schmaldkaldic War in 1547 by Emperor Charles V, Johannes Isaac accepted the offer of a position as Hebrew teacher at the University of Louvain in the Spanish Netherlands. Under a new patron, Johannes and his son converted to Catholicism. In 1551, Isaac left Louvain for a professorship in Hebrew in Cologne. There, vicious gossip of Jewish inconstancy haunted the old man. Feeling he would never be truly accepted, the father began to regret his conversion from Protestantism. Meanwhile, Stephen grew up a fervent Catholic and entered the priesthood. The Jesuits in Cologne, Stephen's patrons, turned son against father. Groomed as a polemicist against Protestantism, Stephen Isaac was granted license to read prohibited Protestant theological writings, which proved his undoing. Troubled by Catholic devotion to saints and icons, in 1582–3 Stephen Isaac openly preached against excessive ritual devotion. Accused of Calvinist sympathies, Stephen broke with his mentors and converted to Calvinism. This scandal, occurring in the aftermath of the Cologne War (1583) – which broke out because the archbishop of Cologne, Gebhard Truchsess, had converted to Calvinism and tried to secularize the bishopric, only to be defeated by Spanish troops – provoked a heap of scorn for Isaac. Ignoring

[28] See Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (New Haven, CT, 2001).

Stephen's theological convictions, Catholic polemicists lambasted the Isaacs' multiple conversions as an expression of their fickle and deceptive Jewish character.[29]

The Catholic–Protestant confrontation sounded a leitmotif in the trickle of Jewish conversions in central Europe: the latter were used as a rhetorical tool in inter-Christian theological confrontations. When two Jewish men, the 29-year-old Joachim Buechel and the 19-year-old Abraham Blin, converted to Catholicism in Bamberg in 1577, the two youths had to declare in a public confession how they had traveled to various parts of Protestant Germany and inquired after various "heretical doctrines," but eventually found Catholicism to be the true religion.[30] The Lutherans had their own Jewish witnesses. In 1621, Malachias ben Samuel, a Lithuanian rabbi, was baptized by Johann Wagner, superintendent of the Lutheran Church in Brunswick. In a public ceremony, Wagner first preached a sermon invoking Luther's critique of Jewish inconstancy. After having been tricked by Jews so many times, Luther, Wagner reminded his flock, had said that if a Jew were to ask for baptism, he would baptize him and immediately tie a stone around his neck and throw him over the Elbe bridge, so that he could not revert to Judaism. The general fickleness of Jewish converts notwithstanding, their few genuine conversions bore important testimonies to the evangelical truth, admonished Wagner. The ceremony then proceeded to an examination of conscience, during which Wagner asked Malachias why he did not accept baptism from the Calvinists or Catholics. The convert answered that he wished for nothing from the Calvinists because for them baptism was only a sign and not a sacrament to forgive sins, and there were many more human innovations and errors with the papists.[31]

The story about drowning the baptized Jew did not originate with Luther. It was a common Christian saying in central Europe: "when one drowns a Jew right after baptism, one knows he dies a Christian" ("Wann man einen Juden in der tauff gleich mit ertrenckte, so wüsste man dass er ein Christ stürbe"). This old saying was quoted by Elias Schad, pastor in Strasbourg, who baptized a Jewish maid and a Jewish youth in 1581. In the sermon preceding the baptism, Pastor Schad also quoted the old saying: "A baptized Jew is like a tamed wolf: one is just as true as the other" ("Es sei ein getauffter Jude wie ein gezämpter Wolff: wie einer glauben halt / also auch

[29] Ibid., 60–2.

[30] *Neun und dreissig Catholische Predigten . . . durch D. Jacobum Feuchthium . . .*, 665.

[31] Johann Wagner, *Judentauffe* (Brunswick, 1621), A2–D4 on Luther and the fickleness of Jewish converts; G1r on Malachias's explanation as to why he rejected Calvinism and Catholicism.

der ander").[32] Only after attacking the many Jews who allegedly converted for money and for worldly reasons did Schad admit that some Jews, indeed, converted out of religious conviction.

The deeply ambivalent Lutheran attitude toward Jewish conversion reflected two larger developments within Christian Europe: first, the vacillating fortunes of Protestantism itself, in its struggle against an increasingly resurgent Catholicism; and second, the tensions between the prophetic–eschatological enthusiasm in evangelical and radical movements and the institutionalization of the Protestant churches. In both instances, there emerged a substantial difference between Lutheran and Calvinist Europe.

In Lutheran Germany, the initial enthusiasm for Jewish missions peaked in the 1530s. Caspar Guthel, pastor in Eisleben, Luther's home town, published a dialog in 1529 between a Lutheran and a Jew. In their friendly conversation, as depicted by Guthel, the Jew was convinced of Jesus' messiahship because of the long history of sufferings of his people.[33] In 1535, Urbanus Rhegius, who had just condemned the Münster Anabaptists as Judaizers and false evangelicals, preached a sermon in Hebrew to the Jewish communities in the Duchy of Brunswick. Citing the Hebrew Scriptures, especially the prophetic books, Rhegius tried to convince the Jews that Jesus hailed from the seed of Abraham and David, and that his messiahship fulfilled the predictions from the Jews' own prophets.[34]

By the 1550s, after Luther's anti-Jewish diatribe and defeat in the Schmalkaldic War, an intense pessimism and bitterness prevailed in Lutheranism, expressing itself in eschatology, heightened confessional intolerance, and antisemitism. When Rhegius's conversion tract was translated into Low German in 1555, his editor Georg Bart used the opportunity to lash out at "evil and obstinate Jews," who, like the "sodomite papists and Anabaptist sacramentarians" were all servants of the devil. What got Bart so agitated was the increasing toleration of Jews in the Holy Roman Empire. More and more rulers and cities allowed Jews to settle; the construction of synagogues and a quietly flourishing Jewish life enraged this devout Lutheran.[35] Indeed, the amelioration of Jewish life in the second half of the sixteenth century resulted from the useful services furnished by Jewish communities (they provided finances, horses, and cattle) to Emperor Charles V in his war against the Lutherans. The last decades of the

[32] Elias Schad, *Form und Process* (Strasbourg, 1582), A4v.
[33] Caspar Guthel, *Von den Straffen und Plagen* ([Zwickau], 1529).
[34] Urbanus Rhegius, *Epistola D. Urbani Rhegii ad totam Judeorum Synagogam Brunsvici habitantem* (Hamburg, 1591).
[35] Georg Bart's Foreword in Urbanus Rhegius, *Gründtlick bewiss* ([Lübeck], 1555), A3v.

Reformation century would see a hardening antisemitism in the Lutheran Church, and Luther's anti-Jewish writings would serve as the foundational texts for the elaboration of a more racialized anti-Jewish discourse, which would have profound influence on Protestant–Jewish relations in Germany during the subsequent centuries.

Georg Schwartz (1530–1602) was a Lutheran cleric who came of age during the troubled times of the Schmalkaldic Wars. A strong eschatological fervor seized the theological heirs of Luther, who saw their age in the throes of the Last Judgment, especially during the years of the Interim (1547–52), when Emperor Charles V imposed a religious settlement after his military triumph over the Protestant princes.[36] Schwartz belonged very much to this generation. A prolific writer of more than twenty works, Schwartz published in 1570 a tract with the sardonic title *The Jew Enemy: On the Noble Fruits of the Talmudic Jews*.[37] The long subtitle of the book spelled out the full litany of anti-Jewish accusations: usury, false coinage, well poisoning, host desecration, blood libel, etc. Allies of the Turks, the Jews blasphemed against Christ and served the devil. Schwartz dedicated his book to the dukes and counts of Hesse, in order to persuade them to expel the Jews from their territories. To bolster his arguments, Schwartz also invoked a long genealogy of anti-Jewish writers, from the Church Fathers to his contemporaries; and none more authoritative than Luther: "In German, nobody has written against them [the Jews] more vehemently, earnestly, and thoroughly than the late Martin Luther. And with such proof and reason, that Satan, the father of all lies, especially of Jewish ones, could not refute them."[38]

In his familiar echo of hateful rhetoric, there was a new motif: the Lutheran cleric claimed that the Ashkenazim were not worthy of the name because they were not Jews but Talmudists. The Jews of the Diaspora were totally different from the Jews of the Old Testament from whom Jesus descended; rather, they belonged to "Satan's synagogue." It was almost 1,500 years since the destruction of the First Temple, Schwartz argued; the Israelites were dispersed and killed, and hardly an authentic Jew was left: "Therefore whoever wants to believe it go ahead, but I do not, that there are many amongst them, who are descended from the unmixed Jewish seed of Abraham. They are well bastards and half-breeds."[39] In his racialist reasoning, Schwartz argued that the pure

[36] The approximately 400 works published in the Protestant stronghold of Magdeburg during the Interim, the so-called Herrgotts Kanzlei, with many works by Matthias Flacius, the leader of the Gnesio-Lutherans in opposition to Melanchthon, expressed a powerful apocalyptic force. See Thomas Kaufmann, *Das Ende der Reformation. Magdeburgs "Herrgotts Kanzlei" (1548–1551/2)* (Tübingen, 2003).

[37] Georg Nigrinus [Schwartz], *Jüden Feind. Von den Edelen Früchten der Thalmudischen Iüden* (Oberursel, 1570).

[38] Ibid., B6v. [39] Ibid., C1.

seed of Abraham had been polluted over the centuries by conquests, intermarriages, and the mixing of Israelites and gentiles, resulting in a race of "mixed blood half-breeds." Yet this process of miscegenation, this creation of a *mestizo* people, in his view, was paradoxically responsible for the essentially immutable character of the Jews. Hence, the water of baptism could not wash away the sign of Jewishness, however altered that might have become. Schwartz held a view that any cultural and religious adaptation remained ineffectual in altering the essential and unchanging racial characteristics attributed to a people. He concluded that Christians who argued for toleration were either bribed by the Jews or completely misguided. Allowing Jews to live amongst Christians means, warned Schwartz, "warming snakes in one's bosom, and raising wolves at home."[40]

The power of Luther's rhetoric in stirring up antisemitism was further illustrated by the expulsion of Jews from the imperial city of Dortmund. After the medieval expulsion, no Jews had been allowed to reside in Dortmund until 1543. A rising tide of lawsuits and Lutheran anti-Jewish rhetoric finally persuaded the city council to expel the Jews once more in 1595/6. Just before the decision, Arnd Westhoff, a printer in Dortmund, brought out a booklet with the title "Christian Instruction of Doctor Martin Luther / On Jewish Lies concerning the Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ / his beloved Mother Mary / and most necessary for all Christians to read from which every Christian can easily conclude / whether one should properly tolerate Jews or not."[41] This pocket book printed on cheap paper represented a stripped-down version of Luther's anti-Jewish writings. The four parts of the booklet consist of a summary of the 'crimes' of the Jews; what one should do with them; admonition to secular and ecclesiastical authorities; and Luther's last sermon in Eisleben against the Jews. In spite of the strong protest of the Frankfurt Jewish community, who petitioned with success to Emperor Rudolf II to issue a prohibition of the work, it did not change the course of events.

In the same decade, the treatment of Jews in the new Dutch Republic struck a remarkable contrast to the continued anti-Jewish prejudices in Protestant Germany. Although the Calvinist Reformed Church was the official Church of the Dutch Republic, it claimed no more than 10 percent of the population as members. The most significant factor in determining the religious policy of the new state was its experience of persecution under the Spaniards. The Union of Utrecht that created the Dutch Republic out

[40] Ibid., L2v.

[41] See R. Po-chia Hsia, "Printing, Censorship, and Antisemitism in Reformation Germany," in Phillip N. Bebb and Sherrin Marshall, eds., *The Process of Change in Early Modern Europe* (Athens, OH, 1988), 135–48.

of the rebel provinces in the Spanish Netherlands guaranteed freedom of conscience in article 13: "Nobody shall be persecuted or examined for religious reasons." This constitutional guarantee created a social space not only for the Jews, but also for other Christian sects persecuted by the major confessional churches. Coming initially in the 1590s as Portuguese merchants – the so-called New Christians – Sephardic Jews quickly and quietly returned to their ancestral faith. While welcomed by the regents of Holland, the Jews were strongly opposed by the Reformed clergy. When the *conversos* reverted to the open practice of Judaism, reaction from the Reformed Church was fierce. The Calvinist minister Abraham Coster attacked the Sephardim as an "unclean people" who sought to build a public synagogue "in which they can perform their evil and foolish ceremonies and spew forth their gross blasphemies against Christ and his holy Gospels, as well as their curses against the Christians and Christian authorities."[42] Almost from the beginning of their settlement in Amsterdam, Protestant groups sought out the Jews for debates and conversion. In 1608, Hugh Broughton (1549–1612), the English pastor of the separatist community in Middelburg, Zeeland, wrote a polemical treatise in Hebrew against Judaism.[43] There were many attempts to convert the Jews in the seventeenth century, notably between 1640 and 1660. Provocations and opposition aside, the Jewish community flourished because of the protection of the regents, who ignored most of the complaints of the Reformed clergy. What mattered to the ruling elites was social peace: the pragmatism guiding magisterial policy stipulated that the Jewish community maintained internal discipline and kept watch over its own boundaries.

The social space created by the Protestant Dutch Republic guaranteed religious toleration as long as certain limits were respected. One line of interdiction prohibited Christian conversions to Judaism. In 1614, the authorities arrested Hans Joostenszoon and his wife, both Mennonites; they had converted to Judaism and had in turn converted an elder of the Reformed Church; all three were arrested, sentenced to death, and had their verdict commuted to exile.[44] For contemporaries, the Dutch Republic seemed less a haven of Protestant toleration than a den of blasphemies. For the Swiss Calvinist Jean-Baptist Stouppe, who served in the army of Louis XIV in the French king's invasion of the Dutch Republic in 1672, the Dutch were not Calvinist at all. He wrote:

[42] Cited in Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, 1997), 59.

[43] Hugh Broughton, *Our Lordes famile and many other poinctes depending upon it: opened against a Iew, Rabbi David Farar: who disputed many houres, with hope to overthrow the gospel, opened in Ebrew explication of Christianitie; that instructed, Rabbi Abraham Ruben. With a Greke epistle to the Geneveans* (n.p., 1608).

[44] Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 60.

It is well known . . . that in addition to the reformed, there are Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Brownists, Independents, Arminians, Anabaptists, Socinians, Arians, Enthusiasts, Quakers, Borelists, Muscovites, Libertines, and many more . . . I am not even speaking of the Jews, Turks, and Persians . . . I must also report on an enlightened and learned man, who has a great following . . . His name is Spinoza. He was born a Jew and had not swore off allegiance to the Jewish religion, nor has he accepted Christianity. He is a wicked and very bad Jew, and not a better Christian either.[45]

Baruch Spinoza, neither Jew nor Christian, lived in this new social space created by the multi-confessional early modern Dutch Republic. If Spinoza is the paradigm of the modern man, living out a lonely existence between religious communities by his sheer intellect, thanks to the Dutch Republic, his teacher, Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (1604–57) played an important role in the readmission of Jews to England. At the invitation of Oliver Cromwell, Menasseh addressed an appeal to him, which strengthened the Lord Protector's hand in granting the settlement of Jews in 1656. In spite of protests from the Anglican clergy and English merchants, a Sephardic community thrived in London after the royal restoration, thanks to the strong financial roles played by leading Jewish bankers in the newly powerful Dutch and English states.

CHRISTIAN ETHNOGRAPHY

The diminished tensions between Protestants and Catholics after the Thirty Years' War also had a stabilizing effect on Protestant–Jewish relations. In their periodic and occasional attempts to convert Jews in the mid and late seventeenth century, Protestant clerics employed their Hebrew learning for persuasion. Philipp Heinrich Friedlieb, senior minister in Lutheran Stralsund, composed a dialog between a Jew and a Christian, in which he demonstrated his knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Talmud.[46] Refuting Judaism in his treatise, Gerhard Titius, professor of Theology at the Calvinist University of Helmstedt, cited the Mishna and rabbinic commentaries.[47] And Conrad Fronmüller of the Lutheran Academy at Altdorf learned Hebrew from Rabbi Henoch Ben Levi and wrote in Hebrew to demonstrate contradictions in rabbinic opinions.[48] Between the late seventeenth century

[45] Cited in Willem Frijhoff, "Hollands Gouden Eeuw," in Herman Balthazar, ed., *De gouden delta der Lage Landen, Twintig eeuwen beschaving tussen Seine en Rijn* (Antwerp, 1996), 192.

[46] Philipp Heinrich Friedlieb, *Die den verstockten Juden zugedeckte Göttliche Klarheit* (Stralsund, 1645).

[47] Gerhard Titius, *Symboli fidei judaicae* (Helmstedt, 1660).

[48] Conrad Fronmüller, *De diversis sententiis rabbinorum* (Altdorf, 1679).

and the eve of emancipation, Protestant views on Judaism, while diverging widely, shared a common reference to Hebrew language sources and engagement with Jewish scholars and communities. The careers of four German Hebraists reflect the full spectrum of the cultural relations between Jews and Protestants.

The first was Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1631–89), a Christian kabbalist, who published studies of the Zohar and leading Jewish kabbalists such as Isaac Luria. These works, *Kabbala denudata*, represented a major advance of Christian scholarship on the Kabbalah after the first serious study by Reuchlin in the early sixteenth century.[49] This scholarship was made possible by the patronage of Count Christian August of Palatinate-Sulzbach, known for his philosemitism and his support of Hebrew scholarship. Important to mention in this regard is that the heightened Christian interest in the Kabbalah coincided with the fiasco of the messianic pretension of the kabbalist Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76), whose conversion to Islam in 1666 devastated many of his followers. Salomon ben Maier, a Frankfurt rabbi who converted to Lutheranism in 1673, was one example.[50]

A second figure was Johann Christoph Wagenseil (1633–1705), professor of Oriental Languages at Altdorf from 1674 to 1697. A student of the Sabbatean Behr Perlhefter and Enoch Levi, Wagenseil devoted his study to Jewish anti-Christian writings. While he excoriated the Jews for blasphemies against Jesus, he defended the Jews against the blood libel. A Christian kabbalist, Wagenseil also hoped for a massive conversion of Jews before the end of time, as he expressed in his major work *Hoffnung der Erlösung Israelis* (Leipzig, 1705).

The Calvinist Johann Andreas Eisenmenger (1654–1704) employed his considerable learning in anti-Jewish polemics. Professor of Oriental Languages at Heidelberg University, Eisenmenger had studied Hebrew in Amsterdam and befriended the Ashkenazic community in Holland. Two episodes of Jewish tirades against Jesus apparently turned Eisenmenger against the Jews; and the scholar found many citations in Hebrew books and rabbinical tracts that he interpreted as anti-Christian polemic. The original citations, translations, and commentaries were published by Eisenmenger in his massive *Entdecktes Judenthum* in Frankfurt in 1700, although Jewish lobbying at the Imperial Court prevented the circulation of the work for over a decade.

[49] Rosenroth published in total four volumes of his *Kabbala denudata, sive doctrina hebraeorum transcendentalis et metaphysica atque theologia*. The first two appeared in Sulzabach, 1677–8; the others in Frankfurt in 1684.

[50] Christoph Paul Maier, *Danck- und Lob-Gesang* (Wittenberg, 1674). "Christoph" was the baptismal name of Salomon ben Maier.

The fourth figure was the rector of the Gymnasium in Frankfurt, Johann Jakob Schudt (1664–1722), who had studied Oriental languages with Ezra Edzardi in Hamburg. A specialist in Jewish history and antiquities, Schudt also benefited from proximity to the largest Jewish community in the Holy Roman Empire. His friendship with the Jews allowed him to observe the community up close and to procure *minhag* and other works of Jewish customs normally ignored by Christian Orientalists at the university. His major work was the massive *Jüdisches Merckwürdigkeiten*, in four parts published in Frankfurt between 1714 and 1718, a compendium of the works of previous generations of Christian Hebraists (Buxtorf, Wagenseil), the writings of Jewish converts (Margaritha and Christiani), and what we might call participant-observations – his many years of conversation and contact with Jews.

TOWARD EMANCIPATION

In the generation before Emancipation, the deeply ambivalent relationship between Protestantism and Judaism was reflected in the writings of two people. The Zurich pastor Johann Caspar Ulrich published a history of Jews in the Swiss Confederation from the thirteenth century to his day. It was a marvelous story how the Jews had been dispersed in so many lands for so many centuries, yet had held on to their ancestral religion. Ulrich wanted to write a true account of their history, and called himself a friend of the Jews, who felt deeply their sufferings. Addressing the Jews, he wrote: "An inner empathy touches my heart that you live in exile under God's banishment and everyone's finger-pointing. I find it impossible to hold back my tears, when I think about your marvelous destiny and reflect on the many persecutions and misery that you and your people had had to endure, compared to which the Babylonian Exile is nothing."[51]

Compare this outpouring by a Calvinist minister to the jottings by a famous Lutheran scholar, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–99), professor of Physics at the University of Göttingen. Founded in 1737, the university was the jewel of the German Enlightenment and the pride of Protestant intellectual life. Son of the superintendent of the Evangelical Church in Darmstadt, Lichtenberg became a shining star in the Enlightenment firmament, known not only for his scientific experiments but also for his literary witticisms. A fervent Anglophile, Lichtenberg wrote of his visit to the London stage. In 1775, he saw a performance of *The Merchant of Venice* by the great Shakespearian actor Charles McLaughlin. After the curtains fell,

[51] Johann Caspar Ulrich, "Vorwort," in *Sammlung Jüdischer Geschichten* (Basel, 1768).

McLaughlin, playing Shylock, emerged to receive the thunderous ovation of the audience. Lichtenberg observed: "When he entered, he was greeted thrice with a general applause, each lasting fifteen minutes. I cannot deny that to see this Jew is more than enough to arouse all childhood prejudices against this people in the most law-abiding man."[52]

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[52] Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Vermischte Schriften*, vol. III (Göttingen, 1867), Third Letter from London, November 30, 1775, p. 266.

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CHAPTER 3

THE RISE OF OTTOMAN JEWRY

JOSEPH R. HACKER

The mass migration of Jews from western and central Europe and the Iberian Peninsula to the eastern Mediterranean region had begun as early as the middle of the fourteenth century, following the Black Death in 1348. Some migrants were compelled to leave while others departed voluntarily. The process intensified in the Iberian lands, especially between 1391 and 1415, as a consequence of persecution and oppressive policies leveled against Jews in the territories of the Crown of Aragon (Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, Roussillon, Majorca, Sicily and Sardinia). These Jews migrated to all corners of the Mediterranean: North Africa, northern and southern Italy, the Mediterranean isles under the control of Italian city-states, the territories of Byzantium and the expanding Ottoman and contracting Mamluk states. Numerous Jews migrated to Italy from the regions of Ashkenaz (Germany and central Europe), from northern France and from Provence. Yet the peak of the emigration from West to East came in the last decade of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. The expulsion of Jews from Spain (Castile, Valencia, Catalonia, and the territories of Aragon) in 1492, from Portugal in 1497, and from Navarre a year later, produced a great wave of Jewish migrants to the northern shores of Africa and to the far reaches of the Ottoman Empire in both the Asian and European parts of Turkey.[1] The Iberian Peninsula was emptied of its Jewish population, although *conversos* remained, many of whom continued to emigrate from Iberia during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The ongoing migration process led to a shift of the bulk of Jewish population during the Middle Ages from western and central Europe to

This chapter was translated from the Hebrew by Jonathan Karp, except where otherwise noted.

[1] On the emigration in this period, see Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. XI (New York, 1967), 192–283; David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry* (Princeton, 2010), 24–55, 235–44; Joseph R. Hacker, "The Links between Spanish Jewry and Palestine, 1391–1492," in Richard I. Cohen, ed., *Vision and Conflict in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1985), 118–25, 134–8.

the eastern Mediterranean, on the one hand, and eastern Europe, on the other. The vast majority of Spanish and Portuguese Jews who had lived under Christian rule now passed to Muslim control. Many of them emigrated, directly or in phases, to the Ottoman Empire, which had expanded during the sixteenth century and now extended from Yemen and Iraq, on the one side, to Serbia, Romania, and Hungary, on the other. Jews also settled in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. In addition, those expellees who had initially made their way to the state of Naples, which agreed to absorb them, were forced to renew their odyssey (most of them into Ottoman territory) after King Charles VIII of France captured it in 1495.

We do not know the total number of these migrants, or even the exact number of Jews living in Iberia prior to the expulsions. Yet it is clear that the largest single concentration of Jewry resided in Old and New Castile, which, prior to the capture of Granada, included over 230 known Jewish communities. In contrast, as a result of pogroms, massacres, conversions, and emigration during the fifteenth century, the number of Jews in Aragon declined precipitously to about 12,000; and in Valencia only between 1,000 and 1,500 Jews remained.[2] By contrast, in Sicily (which was under the control of Aragon), there were approximately 25,000 Jews, according to the most recent estimates.[3]

The traditional estimate of the number of Jews who left Spain is as follows. From Aragon about half the Jews left by sea from the ports of Catalonia and Valencia and via land to Navarre.[4] At the same time, the Jews were expelled from the remaining territories of the Kingdom of Aragon: Catalonia, Valencia, Majorca, Sardinia, and Sicily. The number of Jews in these territories differed from place to place. While relatively few Jews resided in Catalonia and Valencia, their numbers were quite substantial in Majorca and Sicily.[5] Around 20,000 Jews left Sicily alone. A short time later (in 1493), the Jews were expelled from Roussillon and Cerdagne. And in the subsequent years (1493–1501), the Jews of Provence also suffered

[2] Fernando Suarez Bilboa, *Las ciudades Castellanas y sus juderías en el siglo xv* (Madrid, 1955), 272–9 (according to him – 233 communities in Castile); Luis Suarez Fernandez, *Documentos acerca de la expulsión de los Judios* (Valladolid, 1964), 65–72, 75–82 (216 communities listed); Joseph R. Hacker, "New Chronicles on the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Its Causes and Results" [Hebrew], *Zion* 44 (1979), 225.

[3] Shlomo Simonsohn, *Between Scylla and Charybdis: The Jews in Sicily* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2011), 235–8, 455–7.

[4] Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, *La expulsión de los judíos del Reino de Aragón,* vol. II (Saragossa, 1990), 304–15; Dolader, "L'expulsion des juifs de la couronne d'Aragon: directives, causes et conséquences," in Danièle Iancu-Agou, ed., *L'expulsion des Juifs de Provence et de l'Europe Méditerranéenne (XVe–XVIe siècles)* (Paris, 2005), 47–58.

[5] Simonsohn, *Between Scylla and Charybdis*, 235–8, 455–7.

expulsion.[6] As noted, the largest Jewish population resided in Castile, and, according to careful estimates, numbered around 70,000, possibly more. In addition, Andalusia ("New Castile" following its conquest) contained an additional 20,000.[7] The majority of the exiles from Castile headed to Portugal (from whence a portion, mainly after 1497, departed for Muslim territories, as well as Italy), while a minority departed by sea for North Africa, northern and southern Italy, and the Ottoman Empire. But scholars disagree over the numbers of those who left for Portugal. While some estimate, on the basis of documentary evidence, a conservative figure of around 30,000, the actual number might be as much as twice that amount.[8]

The total number of Jews leaving in this period is uncertain, but clearly it was a mass migration of Jews from Christian Europe and Iberia toward the eastern Mediterranean basin and North Africa. Careful analysis suggests that the extent of the emigration between 1492 and 1521, when King Manuel of Portugal died, exceeded 60,000.[9] The number of those who remained and converted, either temporarily or permanently, is estimated to be even higher. Nevertheless, during the course of the sixteenth century, *conversos* continued to flee to the Islamic lands and Italy. A great wave of refugees departed after the Lisbon massacre of 1506 and after King Manuel permitted New Christians to emigrate from Portugal in 1507.[10]

The Jews of the Iberian Peninsula and the lands of the Aragonese Crown constituted the largest Jewish population in the world during the late

[6] See Pierre Vidal, *Les Juifs des anciens comtes de Roussillon et de Cerdagne*, ed. Eduard Feliu (Perpignan, 1992), 102–10, 141–2; Danièle Iancu, *Les Juifs en Provence (1475–1501)* (Marseille, 1981), 163–91, 215–23; Iancou-Agou, ed., *L'expulsion des Juifs de Provence*.

[7] On Castile and Andalusia, see Miguel Angel Ladero Quesada, "Las juderías de Castilla según algunos 'servicios' fiscales del siglo XV," *Sefarad* 31 (1971), 249–64; Ladero Quesada, "El numero de judíos en la España de 1492: los que se fueron," in Angel Alcalá, ed., *Judíos. Sefarditas. Conversos. La expulsión de 1492 y sus consecuencias* (Valladolid, 1995), 170–80.

[8] See María José Pimenta Ferro Tavares, *Los judíos en Portugal* (Madrid, 1992), 38–42; Ferro Tavares, "Expulsion or Integration? The Portuguese Jewish Problem," in Benjamin R. Gampel, ed., *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391–1648* (New York, 1997), 97–9, 316; François Soyer, *The Persecution of the Jews and Muslims of Portugal* (Leiden, 2007), ch. 2.

[9] See Ladero Quesada, "Las juderías de Castilla" and "El numero de judíos en la España de 1492"; and the summary found in Haim Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Oxford, 2002), 284–90.

[10] On the events of 1506 and their consequences, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976), 6–16, 30–4. On the departure of the forced converts from Portugal and Spain and their sea voyage in the Mediterranean to different regions of the Ottoman Empire in 1506 and 1507, see Nadia Zeldes, "Spanish Attitudes Toward *Converso* Emigration to the Levant in the Reign of the Catholic Monarchs," *Eurasian Studies* 2, 2 (2003), 257–63.

fifteenth century. These centers of Jewish life and culture were entirely eradicated in the last decade of that century. Among the victims were some who despaired of their fate and converted instead of going into exile, or even returned to Iberia, but many others did manage to find their way to the Muslim lands where they created new hubs of Jewish settlement and culture. The world's largest center of Jewish population had now shifted from the Iberian Peninsula to the Ottoman Empire. Such a monumental transformation would not have been possible without the approval, support, and express authorization of the Ottoman rulers of the time, the Sultans Bayezid II, Selim, and Suleiman the Magnificent. Nevertheless, scholars have yet to find documentary evidence to substantiate this assumption (although it is possible to infer it indirectly from the fact that the Ottomans appealed to the Genoese on the island of Chios not to impede the passage of Jews toward the Ottoman lands).

Corroboration of the scale of Jewish migration from Iberia to the Ottoman territories can be found in Ottoman census and taxation data. A telling comparison can be made of the data emerging from the documents prior to 1490 and subsequent to 1510. So, for instance, the number of Jewish households tabulated in Istanbul in 1477 is 1,647 (amounting to about 8,000 individuals), while around the year 1535 the number of households rose to 8,070 (around 40,000 people). The years 1477 to 1490 saw only a moderate growth of approximately 250 households. In Salonika, there were no Jews at all recorded in the census of 1478, something confirmed by the poll tax lists of 1480 to 1490; but the 1519 census lists 3,143 Jewish households (in another publication the figure is 3,147) as well as 930 bachelors (totaling around 16,500 souls).[11] These constituted more than half of the city's population. The number did not decline even during the decade of the 1560s following a series of plagues, fires, and other disasters, as indicated in the census of 1567–8 which counted 17,000 Jews, comprising more than 60 percent of the city's total of around 27,000. These censuses do not reflect the total number of residents – many had succeeded in evading them. Hence, the actual numbers were

[11] On Istanbul, see Ḥalil Inalcik, "Istanbul," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., vol. IV (1991), coll. 224-44; Minna Rozen, *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul: The Formative Years, 1453–1566* (Leiden, 2002), 50–4. On Salonika, see Joseph R. Hacker, "The Jewish Community of Salonica from the Fifteenth to the Sixteenth Century" [Hebrew] (Ph.D. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1978), 168–75; Heath W. Lowry, "Portrait of a City: The Population and Topography of Ottoman Selanik (Thessaloniki) in the year 1478," *Diptycha* (Athens) (1980–1), 261–4, 292–3; Melek Delilbaşi, "The Via Egnatia and Selânik (Thessalonica) in the 16th Century," in Elizabeth Zachariadou, ed., *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380–1699)* (Rethymnon, 1996), 67–84.

probably significantly higher than suggested by the census data. Ottoman authorities and tax farmers alike often reckoned the discrepancies at very substantial levels, and in a number of cases obligated Jewish communities to pay 50 percent more than what was required by the census. Even if we lack data from other major communities, such as Cairo and Damascus, the data from Adrianople, Bursa, Safed, and elsewhere attest to the same phenomenon in other urban communities as well.

THE POLICY OF *SÜRGÜN* AND THE MAP OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Parallel with the expulsions of Jews from Christian lands and their immigration to the Ottoman Empire, a process of forced population transfers occurred throughout the Empire itself. As a result of the 1453 conquest of Constantinople, major sections of the city were destroyed; many residents had fled even prior to its capture, while others were killed or taken captive in the process. Mehmed II determined to rebuild the city and transform it into his capital. He freed many of the captives and commanded that large numbers of residents from his kingdom be resettled in the city, now renamed "Istanbul." In the course of a number of years, from 1456 onwards, a majority of Jews living throughout the Empire was forcibly removed to Istanbul and settled on land and buildings designated for them. In this manner, the entire populations of dozens of Jewish communities from European and Asian Turkey were compelled to "resettle" (the policy known as *sürgün*) in the imperial capital. Only a limited number of Jewish communities, from towns that had surrendered to the Ottomans without resistance, remained intact (the Jews together with the other local inhabitants) and were not subjected to this policy.

Residential quarters were established anew for communities in the city whose former populations had been laid waste. Houses were provided to them as well as tax incentives, although at the same time the legal status of *sürgün* ("resettled by force") was imposed upon them. That is to say, both they and their progeny were permanently prohibited from migrating to other regions of the Empire. For all practical purposes, this constricted status remained in force until the seventeenth century, and each individual or group that sought to leave the city was obliged to receive government approval. They were registered in the taxation roll of the place to which they had been exiled and they, or their communities, were obligated for all of their tax payments. Government permission to move to another place of residence was granted only rarely, and even then the recipients were compelled by the Jewish communities to which they relocated to pay taxes in the new location (in addition to the old), due to the fact that

such communities paid taxes to tax lessees in accordance with the size of their populations and the extent of their economic activity. In other words, the legal and economic status and the freedom of movement of these residents (primarily Greek or "Romaniot" Jews in the fifteenth century, but by the sixteenth century some Iberian and Musta'arib [Arabic-speaking] Jews as well) were inferior to those of their brethren who had not been subject to the *sürgün* regulations.

Groups of Jews removed to Istanbul from different locations were settled separately from one another. They are identified in tax registers as individual units (akin to neighborhoods) and referred to according to the name of their place of origin prior to their resettlement in Istanbul. Jews who had not left the city at the time of its conquest also continued to live there, in the Genoese and Venetian quarters, whose inhabitants had surrendered without armed resistance. The tax rolls refer to those who came voluntarily (*kendi gelen*), as well as dozens of communities subjected to *sürgün*, as opposed to the many communities that were not exiled by the Ottoman authorities (although they may at one time have experienced expulsion by Christian rulers), among them Iberian Jewish immigrants, Sicilians, Italians, and Ashkenazim. The *sürgün* communities also included a substantial number of Karaites.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, around forty different Jewish communities resided in the capital, and later over fifty. At this point, following additional Ottoman conquests, many more Jews arrived in Istanbul, as well as in newly conquered regions: for example, from Egypt – following its 1517 conquest – to Istanbul; in 1523, following the island's capture, 150 Jewish families were removed from Salonika to settle in Rhodes; and the Jews of Buda, following the 1526 battle of Mohács, were removed to Istanbul as well as to Edirne (Adrianople), Sofia, and Kavala in Greece. Like the "Romaniot" Jews (the Jewish rendering of the Greek Orthodox "Romaioi" referred to by the Iberian refugees as "Grego" or "Gregos"), more than a few Iberian refugees who became Ottoman subjects after their migration there were subjected to the *sürgün*.[12] Overall, the *sürgün* policy exerted a profound and far-reaching effect on the Jews of the Ottoman Empire during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, determining the residential place and purview of the majority of Romaniot Jews, as well as many Iberian Jewish refugees.

[12] On the phenomenon of the *sürgün* and its impact on the lives of Ottoman Jewry, see Joseph R. Hacker, "The *Sürgün* System and Jewish Society in the Ottoman Empire During the Fifteenth to the Seventeeth Centuries," in Aron Rodrigue, ed., *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership* (Bloomington, 1992), 9–65; Uriel Heyd, "The Jewish Communities of Istanbul in the Seventeenth Century," *Oriens* 6 (1953), 299–314.

Moreover, immigrants, whether forced or voluntary, who had come to the Balkan lands and Anatolia, were likewise subjected to *sürgün* policies; consequently, in the majority of towns and villages under Ottoman control, none of the older Jewish communities remained. This circumstance proved decisive for the subsequent creation of new communities in these regions, which were established and organized on the basis of the different cultures, customs, and traditions of the immigrants and without any dependency on, or even conflict with, a local Jewish population enmeshed in its own traditions. In contrast, in larger cities with significant Romaniot populations, such as Istanbul and Edirne, or in smaller Romaniot communities like Yanina, Messene, and Arta, immigrants were forced to compete with customs, lifestyles, and social structures that were already in place. This was similarly the case in the eastern Mediterranean, in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, where an Arabic-speaking Jewish population had long resided, whom the exiled Europeans labeled "Musta'ariba." In these regions, the Jewish populations had not been significantly affected by the *sürgün* policies and were not uprooted.

When the exiles from the Iberian Peninsula settled throughout the Ottoman Empire, they initially attached themselves to existing communities (where these existed). The waves of immigrants came initially as single families or small groups, rather than as communities en masse. Later, when their numbers multiplied, they split off from the existing community framework and established their own independent community institutions (this certainly took place in larger communities, such as Istanbul, Salonika, Cairo, Damascus, and Safed, but sometimes also in locales with smaller Jewish populations, such as Edirne, Bursa, Serres, and the like).

SEPHARDIC DOMINATION

Within a generation or two, on account of their great number, the Iberian exiles became the majority Jewish population throughout the Ottoman Empire. This was even the case in Istanbul shortly after the exodus of Portuguese Jews. The magnitude of the exiled population, combined with the weakness of the Romaniot and Musta'arib communities, conspired to make the "Sephardim" the dominant force among the Jews of the Empire. They determined the character of the public sphere, shaped the collective identity, and dominated public discourse through their overall conceptions and worldview, while also exerting a profound influence on the majority of immigrants from other lands. Thus, for instance, many of the religious and spiritual leaders of the Musta'arib, Romaniot, Provençal, and Italian Jewish communities were individuals of Iberian origin. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century, there were even communities that adopted the

Castilian liturgical rite in preference to that of their ancestors. This process occurred in cities and settlements with both large and small Romaniot communities under Ottoman rule (such as Istanbul, Edirne, Sofia, Nikopol, Belgrade, Arta, Serres, and Brusa) and in the Levant under governments that changed over from Venetian to Ottoman rule (such as in Lepanto or Patras). The efforts of the Iberian exiles to compel other groups to submit to their codes of conduct also frequently led to quarrels and disputes between the contending sides.

The transformation in the character of the communities and in their conceptual outlook reflected the exiles' powerful impulse to restore the traditions marking their former lives in Iberia, and the sense of mission inspired in them by this aim. They were determined to resurrect their former way of life and previous organizational institutions in their new land. Their words reveal a sense of superiority in relation to their surroundings and a willingness to impose their views and customs on the other Jewish communities in the Empire. It is also possible that, in addition to their large numbers and economic and social clout, and over and above their zeal and certainty regarding the pre-eminence of their traditions, it was in fact the cultural superiority of their intellectual and rabbinic classes over that of the corresponding strata among the other populations that helped make them so successful in imposing their customs on the rest of the Jewish population. Contemporaries of both Iberian and non-Iberian origin attest that the educational attainments of the Iberian exiles exceeded those of all other groups, due to both the quality of the instructional methods involved and the heavy investment made in developing their institutions of learning. While personalities and scholars of the first rank were also active among the Romaniot (especially in Istanbul) and among the Ashkenazim, their numbers were not proportionate. In contrast, the expulsions and migrations brought a great many sages and scholars from Spain and Portugal to the Ottoman Empire. These had already stamped their imprint on the larger Ottoman Jewish community even during the first generation of exiles.[13]

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND CHARACTER

It appears that the *sürgün* policies also influenced the decision of Ottoman Jewry to adopt a splintered organizational structure based on the immigrants'

[13] On these processes, see, for instance, Joseph R. Hacker, "Superbe et désespoir: l'existence sociale et spirituelle des Juifs ibériques dans l'Empire ottoman," *Revue historique* 285/2, 578 (avril–juin 1991), 261–93; Hacker, "The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth Century," in Haim Beinart, ed., *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, vol. II (Jerusalem, 1992), 111–18, 125–7.

place of origin, at least until the middle of the sixteenth century. While, in the wake of the 1391 pogroms, Jews from the regions of the Crown of Aragon and from a portion of Castile departed for North Africa and there established a single unified and integrated block encompassing all immigrants from "Sepharad," this was by no means the case in the Ottoman lands after 1492. In North Africa, the Jewish community was divided into two segments: on the one hand, Arabic speakers who were longtime residents of this region, and on the other, refugees who had fled from the Iberian Peninsula, principally from Aragon and Catalonia. Thus, Jews there were fragmented in their leadership and institutions. The same organizational structure also emerged in Morocco after the arrival of exiles from all regions of Spain and Portugal in the aftermath of 1492. In contrast, in all the Jewish settlements throughout the Ottoman Empire (with the exception of Jerusalem), separate communities arose on the basis of the places of origin of the various exiles. Whenever a given group of common descent increased and acquired sufficient means to do so, it formed its own community.

In this manner, many communities (*kehalim*) were established in every city, and even in small towns and villages where the number of Jews was modest, several different communities might be established on the basis of origin. During the course of the sixteenth century, this process intensified as a consequence of divisions between existing and established communities and new ones deriving from the same place of origin, or as a result of the joining together of groups and individuals deriving from different locales. In great centers such as Istanbul and Salonika (we lack detailed data on Cairo), over fifty communities came into being, and even in smaller centers such as Edirne (Adrianople), Safed, or Bursa, dozens of distinct communities emerged. In yet smaller centers, there might be two to six such communities.

Communities were established on the basis of a myriad of divisions, such as region of origin (e.g., Aragon, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Sicily, Apulia, Calabria, Portugal, Provence, Castile, and the Maghreb); city of origin (as in the case of numerous Romaniot communities in Istanbul after 1456; and of *sürgün* communities like Evora, Otranto, Toledo, Seville, Córdoba, Lisbon, and Buda); ethnic-cultural identity (Ashkenazim, Romaniots, Karaites, Kurds, and Babylonians); and common group experiences (e.g., as exiles, or forced converts, such as the congregation of Livyat Chen in Salonika). Men from wealthy and powerful families might form the basis of congregations (such as the Hamon and Senior clans). At a later stage, individuals relocating from a particular ethnic population or geographical region within the Empire itself (such as Romaniots and Babylonians in Safed and Balat or Antalya in Istanbul) founded congregations. In places where few Jews derived from a given

locale, they might unite to create a new community – for instance, the community of "Sepharad" for all Iberian immigrants living in Patras. Likewise, all of the Iberian communities would unite to achieve specific aims in relation to the other communities in the city – such as establishing the membership of new immigrants arriving from Iberia (or Italy) on the basis of a predetermined system of allocation (as in Salonika or Safed), or in accordance with representation before the authorities for tax payments, and the issuance of ordinances to the general public (in Istanbul and Salonika).

This organizational framework, one that initially developed in Istanbul in the wake of its conquest, spread quickly through all the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It nicely suited the immigrants' need for mutual support and familiarity of language and culture, and it offered a helpful framework for their adaptation to new locales. The arrangement received official recognition from the Ottoman authorities, but we do not know who instigated the process and to what degree the Iberian immigrants themselves took the initiative. It is perfectly clear, nevertheless, that they were the ones who intensified, elaborated, and extended the application of this policy, despite rabbinic efforts to limit and contain fragmentation and divisions within the communities. Such an organizational structure had far-reaching implications for the activities of the Jewish population. On the one hand, it offered a fair degree of autonomy to each grouping to manage its affairs independently. On the other, it aggravated tensions and conflicts between the different congregations and seriously obstructed unified action on the part of the city's broader Jewish community to address their needs and represent themselves before the authorities.[14]

The basic unit of each congregation included a number of institutions and functionaries, the foundation of which was the synagogue, without which no community could exist. Many congregations also acquired a separate parcel of cemetery property for their congregants' burial needs. Aside from the congregation's governance body, known as the *mahamad*, which was chosen or appointed by the members, there were also "societies" (*ḥevrot*; singular: *ḥevra*) devoted to charity and study, such as the burial society, the society devoted to performing "good deeds," and the society devoted to visiting the sick. Large congregations with sufficient economic

[14] On the organizational structure of the Jewish community in the Ottoman Empire, see Joseph R. Hacker, "The Structure and Scope of Jewish Organization and Self-Government in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th–17th Centuries," *Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları* 26, 4 (1990), 341–51; Hacker, "Communal Organization Among the Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire (1453–1676)," in Avraham Grossman and Yosef Kaplan, eds., *Kehal Yisrael: Jewish Self-Rule Through the Ages*, vol. II (Jerusalem, 2004), 287–309 [Hebrew].

means and social capacity also had separate educational institutions, a Talmud Torah, study houses (with separate times for the community at large and for the patrons and scholars), and, in rare instances, a guest house and hospital. Each congregation included salaried religious functionaries, including the scholar or *marbitz torah* – whether a *hakham* or rabbi – the cantor, beadles in the synagogue, and elementary school teachers. The core of communal activity was the internal application of law; each community had its own court or *bet din*, at the head of which stood the *marbitz torah*, who possessed sole authority to render judgments in internal matters and in regard to members' claims. The congregation and its elected assessors (*ma'arikhim*) determined the tax assessment of individual members. The community leaders were responsible for ensuring payment of their own congregation's relative portion of the total sum imposed on the city's Jews, the costs incurred through the broader Jewish community's expenditures, and the financing of its needs, as well as those of their own particular subgroup.

The congregations differed from one another not merely in regard to their members' places of origin and their own internal operations but also in accordance with their size. The large congregations included 100 to 200 households. But there were also communities of different sizes, including very small ones comprised of only a few dozen families. The congregation's size, its wealth, and its membership determined its specific standing and representation in the municipal body of the *mahamad* that supervised all of the city's congregations. This body convened to consider and decide on all matters touching the lives of the city's Jewish residents as a whole, and did so either in a routine fashion (in accordance with the Istanbul model, with a designated leadership permanently in place that constituted the community's representatives and lobbied before the Ottoman authorities on behalf of the city's Jews as a whole) or on an as-needed or ad hoc basis (on the Salonikan model, where there was no fixed umbrella leadership for the various congregations, but rather occasional meetings when the need arose, an arrangement that would persist until the last decade of the sixteenth century).

This form of organization led to widespread autonomy, not just for the local community as a whole but also for particular elements within it. This phenomenon of local autonomy is unique in the Jewish history of the medieval and early modern periods, in the Muslim and Christian realms alike. The various congregations in the city enjoyed extensive self-government both from a juridical standpoint and with regard to the supervision of all religious, social, and economic matters. Members were evidently subjected only to their own community's court. They paid taxes to the state together with the other congregations, but taxes and levies for internal uses were

directed only to their own congregation. Members alone had the authority to choose their leadership, their tax assessors, and other officials, and only they participated in the congregation's institutions. Their representatives were elected or appointed to perform their offices in the framework of the congregation, and if in some particular matter they did not agree with the decisions or policies of the city's other Jewish congregations they could not be compelled to submit. In some individual centers, such as Istanbul and the majority of the communities of Asiatic Turkey (Anatolia) as well as the Land of Israel, the challenges created by this centrifugal tendency were met by creating institutions that stood above the individual congregations and through which joint policies could be outlined and binding decisions imposed. For other communities, such as those of Salonika and the majority of those in European Turkey, the city's congregations were generally not authorized to impose their views on one another, even in matters that affected the entirety of the city's Jewish population. In this manner, the Romaniot, Italian, and Ashkenazic congregations preserved their independence, their way of life, and distinctive religious character in the face of pressure or efforts at compulsion by the "Sephardic" majority.

JURIDICAL POSITION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AUTHORITIES

As a Muslim state, the Ottoman Empire based its relationships with subjects who were members of other monotheistic faiths, among them Jews, on a classically Islamic approach. They were defined as protected subjects (*dhimma*), and in exchange for their recognition of Islam as the ruling and supreme faith, and in return for paying various taxes, including the poll tax (*jizya* and *kharadj*), they were entitled to government protection. In addition to this, the *dhimmi* were responsible for paying the regular taxes imposed on all Ottoman subjects, even if at times the rates imposed on *dhimmi* were higher than for Muslims – while in a few instances (especially regarding customs duties), rates levied on Christians were higher than on Jews. There were also a number of limitations imposed on *dhimmi*: on their dress, the size of their dwellings, and, in particular, the size of their churches and synagogues. The building of new synagogues – beyond those that existed at the time of Muslim conquest – was prohibited. They could not ride on a horse, carry weapons, own slaves, or serve in positions as officials or functionaries affording any kind of authority and dominance over Muslim subjects, such as government officials, physicians treating Muslims, and the like. While these rules and regulations were well known and long-standing, in practice many such limitations remained unenforced. In the Ottoman Empire, particularly

during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the restrictions imposed on Jews on the basis of this policy were few. In fact, individual Ottoman Jews served in numerous governmental and administrative positions, and might own maidservants or trade in slaves. They served as physicians to the Muslim population and several were hired by the Porte, or were the Sultan's personal physicians. During the rule of Bayezid II (1481–1512), the prohibition on building new synagogues was indeed enforced, precisely in the period of the great immigration of refugees from "Sepharad," and only during the reign of Selim I (1512–20) was the yoke loosened and the regulation not enforced. From the 1540s, governmental orders were issued to examine the legality of the synagogues of the eastern provinces, to determine whether they were new establishments. In 1545, an old synagogue was closed in Cairo for several decades, the ancient synagogue of the Musta'arib Jews in Damascus was destroyed in 1552 (replaced by a mosque), and harassment of worshipers in the synagogue of Jerusalem became frequent from the 1550s, and in 1587 it was closed down until the seventeenth century.[15] Distinctions in the application of these rules must also be made with regard to regional differences and variations between center and periphery, as well as time periods and changing rulers.

Despite the fact that the *dhimmi* in general and Jews among them were regarded as second-class subjects and often subjected to humiliation and abuse by the general public and government agents, they were accorded religious autonomy as well as occupational freedom in all fields of labor and endeavor that they wished to pursue. They enjoyed internal autonomy to manage their affairs and, as long as the Jewish community effectively policed the behavior of its members and avoided public controversy, the authorities did not interfere. When controversies and disputes between individuals or among different congregations did erupt and came before the local Ottoman official or *qadi*, the latter often proved eager to get involved or exploit the situation for their own advantage. Jews also benefited due to their system of judicial autonomy, even if this autonomy was inevitably circumscribed and subordinated to the jurisdiction of the local *qadi*. In the period here under consideration, during the fifteenth and

[15] On the status and legal position of the *dhimma* (including Jews) in earlier Islam, in the Middle Ages, and in the Ottoman Empire, see Claude Cahen, "Dhimma," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., vol. II (1991), 227–31; see also the articles by C. E. Bosworth, B. Braude, J. R. Hacker, and A. Cohen, in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vols. I–II (New York, 1982); Karl Binswanger, *Untersuchungen zum status der Nichtmuslime im Osmanischen Reich des 16. Jahrhunderts. Mit Einer Neudefinition des Begriffes "Dhimma"* (Munich, 1977); Haim Gerber, *Crossing Borders: Jews and Muslims in Ottoman Law, Economy and Society* (Istanbul, 2008), 35–64.

sixteenth centuries, Jews were not residentially segregated and lived in towns with mixed Muslim, Christian, and Jewish neighborhoods, even though many preferred to be concentrated in their own "Jewish" areas. From the end of the sixteenth century, and in particular during the seventeenth, the tendency increased for Muslim public, religious, and governmental officials to push the *dhimmi* (both Jews and Christians alike) outside of mixed neighborhoods, and in particular to remove them from close proximity to mosques.[16]

Jews not infrequently turned to Islamic courts, not solely in cases where one side was a Muslim, when the use of the state court was obligatory, but even in cases involving litigation between a Jew and a Christian or between fellow Jews. The autonomous Jewish legal system was quite broad since it adjudicated matters in all areas of life (excluding capital offenses), in contrast to the situation in Christian lands during that era. Even so, Jews made use of Muslim courts on every possible matter, including disputes over religious issues. It might be the case that this widespread resort to Muslim courts occurred because such courts were ultimately backed up by governmental enforecement, a power their Jewish counterparts lacked. In specific cases (for example, women's inheritance), Islamic law might prove more sympathetic to one of the parties, or in other instances the litigants might hope to bolster the decision of the Jewish court by seeking official sanction in state law, for instance in matters of endowments and benefits (*wakaf*).[17]

[16] On the policy of the authorities toward synagogues in mixed neighborhoods and the practice of non-Muslim religions in public, see Amnon Cohen, *Jewish Life under Islam: Jerusalem in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), 76–86; Shimon Shtober, ed., *Sefer Divrei Yosef by Yosef ben Yitzhak Sambari* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1994), 411–12; Eliezer Rivlin and Joseph Yoel Rivlin, "Annals of the Jews in Damascus in the Seventeenth Century" [Hebrew], *Reshumot* 4 (1926), 105–10. On Istanbul and Safed, see Uriel Heyd, *Ottoman Documents on Palestine, 1552–1615* (Oxford, 1960), 169–71; Haim Gerber, *Economic and Social Life of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th Centuries* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1982), 121–2 ; Gerber, *Crossing Borders*, 110–11.

On the process in Istanbul after the fire of 1569, see Minna Rozen and Benjamin Arbel, "Great Fire in the Metropolis," in David J. Wasserstein and Ami Ayalon, eds., *Mamluks and Ottomans: Studies in Honor of Michael Winter* (New York, 2006), 140–4.

[17] On Jewish judicial autonomy and its limitations, and on the resort to Islamic courts, see Joseph R. Hacker, "Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire: Its Scope and Limits: Jewish Courts from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in Avigdor Levy, ed., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Boston, 1994), 153–202; Gerber, *Crossing Borders*, 107–11, 159–80; Amnon Cohen and Elisheva Simon-Pikali, *Jews in the Moslem Religious Court: Society, Economy and Communal Organization in the XVIth Century. Documents from Ottoman Jerusalem* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1993); Gilles Veinstein, "Une communauté ottomane: les Juifs d'Avlonya (Valona) dans la deuxième moitié du XVIe siècle," in G. Cozzi, ed., *Gli Ebrei e Venezia, secoli XIV–XVIII* (Milan, 1987), 781–828.

A prominent feature of Ottoman rulers and society over the course of many generations was its tolerance and lack of discrimination on the basis of the race or ethnicity of its subjects. The Ottoman polity was comprised of a rich mosaic of peoples and ethnic components. These succeeded in winning equal status, devoid of prejudice with regard to their origins, as long as they accepted the Muslim faith. All could be incorporated into the social and governmental systems, whether they were Muslims by birth or were converted through compulsion or choice. Also, those from *dhimmi* origins, including Jews, could be introduced into Islamic society without serious obstacles or impediments (and this in sharp contrast to the situation in Christendom generally and in Iberia particularly, at that time).

This fact is especially apparent in the phenomenon of the *devshirme*. The *devshirme* system was already practiced in the days of the Ottoman chieftain Orhan, around 1330, and continued to function throughout the entire period discussed here. Once every few years, a fixed quota of Christian children of a young age would be taken from their families, for the most part in the Balkan lands, and transferred to be educated and Muslimized in Anatolia. Later, through a process of continuous training, they were prepared for integration into the Janissary army, the infantry. Despite their origins, many of these individuals moved up the ranks and were absorbed into senior positions in the army and into the local and central Ottoman administration. Over the course of time, these men might restore their severed ties with their birth families and even bring them into, and help them advance within, the government system. As far as is known, after Constantinople fell to the Ottomans in 1453, some Jewish children were likewise seized for *devshirme*, in circumstances that nevertheless remain somewhat murky. However, a document from the last decade of the fifteenth century from the town of Trikala in Greece makes clear that at that time Jews were exempt from the *devshirme*, and we know of no further episodes of Jewish children being removed from the parent for the *devshirme*.[18] This case clearly indicates that state policies were not applied consistently in the same way to the *dhimma*.

A further example is seen in the policies of the sultans during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries toward blood libels. Such cases as were fomented, mainly by Greek and Armenian Christians, included accusations of murdering Muslims or Christians to use their blood for ritual

[18] On the *devshirme*, see, for instance, Victor L. Ménage, "Devshirme," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II, 210–13; B. Papulia, *Ursprung und Wesen der "Knabenlese" im Osmanischen Reich* (Munich, 1963). On Jews and the *devshirme*, see Hacker, "The *Sürgün* System," 15–18, 52–3; Nicoara Beldiceanu, "Un acte sur le statut de la communauté juive de Trikala," *Revue des Études Islamiques* 40 (1972), 133 n. 5; 137–8.

purposes. We know of six such libels in this period: before 1481 (under the reign of Mehmed II); in 1544 in an Arab province; in 1553 in Amasya; in 1592 in Bursa; in 1602 in Thebes; and probably in Istanbul in 1633. From the orders of the sultans that have been preserved, it appears that special directives were issued for the protection of the Jews, requiring that all such incidents be brought before the judgment of the *Dîwân-i Hümâyûn* and banned from being discussed by local rulers and judges.[19]

This was also the case in matters of taxation. Even though, typically, no distinction was made concerning the imposition of the majority of taxes and obligations on the *dhimma*, whether Jews, Christians, or Armenians, in some cases taxes might indeed be imposed on one group but not the others. Such was the case, for instance, with the "rabbi tax" (*cizye-i râv; râv-akçesi*) levied on many Jewish communities although not on all, in all likelihood in return for permission granted to those communities to appoint a judge for themselves and pay annually for the privilege. Indeed, the Christians also paid a special fee for the confirmation of the appointment of the patriarch and the metropolitan bishops to their offices. Nevertheless, this was not in the manner of a tax levied on the general public, but rather of a payment by the candidates for permission to be appointed – in other words, a purchase of the office. Such was not the case, however, with the Jews, who were not required to seek government confirmation for their appointments,[20] although they were expected to acquire the consent of the local officials.

These examples make it abundantly clear that the central and local authorities were well aware of the differences that existed between different groups of *dhimmi* and didn't always adopt a uniform stance and approach toward them. And indeed, this consciousness on the part of the Ottoman authorities was already apparent as early as the fourteenth century. At times, this awareness extended to theological distinctions between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and the authorities occasionally even encouraged disputations of Jewish converts to Islam and Muslims with Christian personages.[21] Such debates, however, no longer occurred in later periods, from the sixteenth century on.

[19] On the blood libel in the Ottoman Empire, see Uriel Heyd, "Ritual Murder Accusations in 15th and 16th Century Turkey" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 5 (1961), 135–49; Amnon Cohen, "Ritual Murder Accusations Against Jews During the Days of Suleiman the Magnificent," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986), 73–8.

[20] Joseph R. Hacker, "The 'Chief Rabbinate' in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and 16th Centuries" [Hebrew], *Zion* 49 (1984), 240–3.

[21] See, for instance, Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, "Religious Dialogue Between Byzantines and Turks During the Ottoman Expansion," in Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner, eds., *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden, 1993), 291–5.

How did the authorities view the Jews in general and how did they relate to them as a public legal personality? From edicts and official documents issued by the central government and local authorities, it emerges that the Jews were labeled as *tāifa* ("tribe, guild, corporation"), as well as sometimes by pejorative terms such as *Küfre* ("infidels"), and the like. It's evident that the authorities related to them as a group, but prior to the eighteenth century there appears to be no indication that these designations referred to Jews as possessing any genuine political autonomy, nor do they indicate a common status encompassing all of the Empire's Jews. They are designations confined to a religious community, or refer to an individual who belonged to a particular religious community. Similarly, the term *milla* ("religion, religious community") that appears occasionally in official records as a designation of identity for Jews, Muslims, and Christians, lacks any connotation of nationality, corporation, or special status in this period, in the manner that the term *millet* would signify when applied to non-Muslim communities of *dhimmi* in the eighteenth century and beyond.[22]

An outstanding illustration of the stark contrast between the relationships of Ottoman authorities versus Christian authorities toward their respective Jewish populations is the fact that, in the former case, Jews joined with Muslims as members of guilds. There were even instances where a Jew stood at the head of a mixed guild (*Kâhya* or *Kethuda*), and at the same time there were also solely Jewish guilds. Jews stood out particularly in guilds specializing in the manufacture of textiles and linens, as well as guilds of jewelers. This situation of mixed guilds side by side with Jewish or Christian ones pertained in both the European and the Asian regions of the Empire, as well as in Egypt and Syria from the beginning of our period right up through the eighteenth century.[23]

[22] See Cohen, "On the Realities of the Millet System, Jerusalem in the Sixteenth Century," in Braude and Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 7–18; Gerber, *Crossing Borders*; A. Cohen, "Communal Legal Entities in a Muslim Setting. Theory and Practice: The Jewish Community in Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem," *Islamic Law and Society* 3, 1 (1996), 75–89; Michael Ursinus, "Millet," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, VII (1993), 61–4; Paraskevas Konortas, "From Ta'ife to Millet: Ottoman Terms for the Ottoman Greek Orthodox Community," in D. Gondicas and Charles Issawi, eds., *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy and Society* (Princeton, 1999), 169–79.

[23] See Gabriel Baer, "The Structure of Turkish Guilds and Its Significance for Ottoman Social History," *The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Proceedings* 4, 10 (1970), 176–96; Baer, "Ottoman Guilds: A Reassessment," in Osman Okyar and Ḥalil Inalcik, eds., *Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071–1920)* (Ankara, 1980), 95–102; Yaron Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans* (Tübingen, 2008), 343–6; Gerber, *Crossing Borders*, 71, 79, 111–15, 116–21; Suraiya Faroqhi and Randi Deguilhem, eds., *Crafts and Craftsmen in the Middle East* (London, 2005).

Despite this relative tolerance toward Jews in comparison with the approach adopted by most Christian states in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, sources from the period do describe a consistent policy of pressure on Jews and Christians to convert to Islam. This policy was especially pronounced in the effort to persuade, by means of carrots and sticks, individual Jews close to the government in Istanbul to become Muslims in order to advance in the governing bureaucracy. Another approach taken by ruling and popular elements alike was to allege that a *dhimmi* had acknowledged the supremacy of Islam and its singular prophet – or, contrariwise, that he had cursed the prophet. Consequently, if he refused to convert, he risked forfeiting his life. Similarly, individuals arrested for economic or other crimes, or who had been taken captive, could purchase their freedom by means of becoming Muslims. But, more generally, the pervasive policy of discrimination by Muslims against *dhimmi*, and the humiliation and degradation that not infrequently characterized the daily lives of the latter, tended to compel their acknowledgment of Islam's superiority and thus result in conversions.

This complex portrait of Muslim social and political relations toward Jews produced an equivalently complex relationship of the leadership and educated stratum of Jewish society with regard to the Empire and its rulers. So, for example, a clear contrast can be seen during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the relations of Romaniot Jews and Jews of Iberian origin to the Ottoman government. The former stressed the cruelty of the Ottoman military conquest, the catastrophe that befell them as a result of wars and of expulsion and resettlement in the framework of the policies of colonization, and the hardships of the *sürgün*; the latter, who had managed to escape Christian assault and settle in the Empire, emphasized the beneficence of merciful Ottoman kings while typically covering up their acts of discrimination and oppression. Many of the Iberian immigrants heaped praise on the Ottoman government, delighted in its triumphs, and viewed it as the agent of divine vengeance upon Christendom, viewing the sultan as a player in the unfolding messianic schema of the end of days.

JEWISH LEADERSHIP AND JEWISH REPRESENTATION TO THE SULTAN

The question of whether or not there existed one official representative body for all Ottoman imperial Jews, or whether representation was either appointed or recognized by the central Ottoman government, remains a point of contention among historians. In the classical Jewish historiography from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in the academic literature till the 1970s, it was assumed that Mehmed II had appointed

Rabbi Moshe Capsali as chief rabbi after the fall of Constantinople, and that Capsali had served in this position until his death, after which time Rabbi Elijah Mizrahi succeeded to the office until the 1520s. However, careful analysis of the sources shows that whether Capsali was directly appointed by the Ottoman authorities or merely confirmed by them in this position, his jurisdiction and that of his successors in Istanbul did not exceed the territorial limits of the capital and its environs.

In any case, no centralized authority for all of the Empire's Jews existed until the creation of the office of the Hakham Bashi at the beginning of the nineteenth century (1835) – and even then a number of individuals existed simultaneously in positions of equal importance. Indeed, the roles of the head of the court (*av bet din*) and rabbi of Istanbul possessed significant importance and prestige, particularly in the fifteenth century before the arrival of the waves of refugees from Christian lands, given that the majority of Romaniot Jews were concentrated in Istanbul after 1456. The chief of the court in Istanbul stood at the institutional head of the various Jewish communities of the city and exerted considerable influence over Jewish lives. Nevertheless, in parallel with the city's Rav, the communities of Istanbul ("Kushta" in Hebrew) had their own civic government and a *kethuda* ("appointed official") who, in certain matters, represented all of the city's Jews before the authorities. From a formal, legal standpoint, only the Jews of Istanbul fell under the jurisdiction of the Rav of the capital city, while the city's communal heads and officials, by virtue of their appointed status, represented only the Jews of the capital before the Ottoman officials.[24]

That the central Jewish leadership was not anchored in an official position endowed with juridical authority over all the Empire's Jews was a reality with far-reaching implications for the image and development of the peripheral Jewish communities, both near and far. In new communities, for the most part "Sephardic," a local leadership evolved, with both a civic and religious character, that relied on the capital city only when it wished to, or when compelled to do so because of irresolvable internal disputes. Here too the selection and appointment of individuals to managerial and judicial positions in the local communities occurred on the basis of full autonomy, without deference to the capital or the authorities there.

In this respect, the situation pertaining to Ottoman Jewry differed from all that we know about the Jews of Islamic lands during the Middle Ages. In the centralized Islamic states, such as the caliphates, the Fatimid Kingdom and that of the Mamluks, the rulers created centralized leaders

[24] On all of this, see Hacker, "The 'Chief Rabbinate,'" 225–63.

at the head of religious minorities. These people represented the *dhimma* and concerned themselves with the community's internal organization, its legal observances, its tax collections, and its appointment of judges, and were held responsible before the ruler. Such was the case with the office of *resh galuta* in Babylonia, as well as with that of the *ra'is el yahud* and the *nagid* in Egypt, who were appointed by the state – at times with the recommendations of the community, at times without. Not infrequently, such figures involved themselves in the affairs of the local communities and in the appointment of leaders and functionaries in those communities. But this was not at all the case in the Ottoman Empire. There, revenues were collected by tax farmers, while judges and official Torah scholars were hired by the communal authorities in each locale, and those same authorities were elected by the members of the various congregations. While the position of Ecumenical Patriarch had been established at the head of the Greek Christian minority immediately following the conquest of Constantinople, and later the head of the Armenian community was similarly determined, no counterpart emerged for the Jewish minority (it should be noted, however, that some scholars have recently claimed that the patriarch of Istanbul was not recognized as the leader of all the state's Christians but only of those in Istanbul and its satellites).

Consequently, the Ottoman Empire gave rise to distinct autonomous Jewish centers of power and civilization that were independent of one another and that represented their communities on a local basis to both the local and central Ottoman authorities. This circumstance fitted well with the approach of the Ottoman rulers, who left the management of Jewish affairs in each city and district in the hands of the local governor, the *qadi*, the police chief, and other government officials. They were the ones who implemented the laws and policies affecting local Jews. Naturally, this left a void in the hierarchical framework of the Jewish population whenever a need emerged to address a problem affecting the entirety of the Empire's Jews, or in concrete crisis situations. This void was typically filled by Jewish individuals from Istanbul close to the Ottoman sultan, the vizier, or other powerful figures in the Porte. These individual Jews included physicians of the sultan or of members of the ruling clique, leaseholders and administrators connected to the finance minister (*defterdar*) or to the Janissary commander, as well as Jewish diplomats in the service of the state. Such Jewish notables achieved positions of wide sway and shaped the relations of Jews as a group to the rulers, while also exerting a decisive impact through their arbitration of internal disputes for far-flung Jewish communities.

Such individuals existed among all the ethnic divisions of the Empire's Jews, including Romaniot Jews (like Yeshayahu Messene), Karaites,

Italians (Jacopo of Gaeta), Ashkenazim (such as Shlomo Ashkenazi), and especially Iberian Jews (such as members of the families Hamon, Benbanbenesht, Ibn Yaish, Ibn Shangi, Mendes, Nasi, and a number of others).[25] Such notables became involved when the need arose for legislation against blood libels, when the regional or local authorities conspired against or abused a Jewish community, whenever a virulent conflict erupted between Jewish communities or when violent Jews forced their will on the public with the support of Ottoman agents, or when damaging economic decrees were issued or an order of the *sürgün* fell on a particular community. They did what they could to revoke the command, the policy, or the caprice by exerting their influence and through generous payments to functionaries at the Porte. Thus, the Jewish community of Istanbul and the Jewish courtiers present there were transformed into the de facto leadership of the entire Ottoman Jewish population, not by virtue of any formal office but due to propitious circumstances, i.e., their location in the capital city close to the sultan's palace, their economic weight, and especially their key personal ties with the political elite in the capital city.

At the same time, in the Jewish population centers on the periphery, in the Balkan lands, in Anatolia, and in Egypt and Syria, a local Jewish leadership emerged that represented the resident Jews to the local authorities. These individuals ranged from those who served their communities in no formal capacity, but rather were individuals of wealth and power – such as the lessees of mines in Sidrekapsi (in northern Greece), various tax and customs farmers, the chief minter in Egypt (De Castro), or the lessee of all of the imposts in the port of Alexandria, and the like – to men of economic and public influence within the Jewish community, including representatives to the government. In parallel, the leaders of the *mahamads* of the city's communities, the *Shaykh al-yahūd* in the eastern lands, or men who were selected to be responsible in the different communities for the determination of communal taxes and for allocating and paying them to the authorities, all these became the very men who maintained connections with the local governments of different types and grades and with the revenue collectors who were so numerous and diverse in the Ottoman Empire.

[25] See, for instance, Mark A. Epstein, "The Leadership of the Ottoman Jews in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in Braude and Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews*, 101–15; Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden, 1995), 13–54, 77–86; Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. II (New York, 1973), 1143–85; Uriel Heyd, "Moses Hamon, Chief Jewish Physician to Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent," *Oriens* 6 (1963), 152–70; Ben-Naeh, *Jews of the Sultans*, 116–18, 192–213, 319–26.

SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

The roots of the Jewish encounter with the Ottomans and their rapidly expanding Empire can be glimpsed as early as the fourteenth century. We have information regarding Jewish physicians in the service of Ottoman rulers, Jewish merchants active in cities under Ottoman control, and even a handful of Jewish communities existing in regions conquered by the Ottomans in the fourteenth century, such as Anatolia and European Turkey. This was the case with Bursa, which had been conquered by Orhan in 1326; in Magnesia in the emirate of Sarukḫān, annexed by Bâyezîd in 1391 (following the conquest of Gallipoli in 1354); and in Edirne in 1361. Nevertheless, extensive and detailed information on the economic activity of Jews under Ottoman rule is available only from the second half of the fifteenth century and later in such urban centers as Istanbul, Bursa, and Edirne, as well as in the regions of the Balkans and the Black Sea. The bulk of this material concerns the economic activities of Romaniot Jews and Karaites, as well as Jews from Muslim lands such as Syria and Egypt, who dealt with and even traveled to the commercial centers in Anatolia – but not the endeavors of the Iberian exiles. The documents make clear that these Jews engaged in international trade and in the local sale of imports, such as European fabrics and textiles (produced in Italian cities such as Florence and Venice), silk from Syria and India, and spices from India. A number of Jews from the cities of the Empire established branch ties with the Balkan lands and the regions near the Black Sea, and even traded with Russia, among them exporters of horse and animal hides, fabrics, garments, pelts, mohair, and other such goods. Others, who worked as goldsmiths, conducted business in gems, pearls, precious stones, and in ostrich feathers; they were also active in currency exchange and in the distribution of stamped coins. In addition to these activities, a great many Jews also served as lessees of taxes, customs, and various other revenues of state in the period of Mehmed II (1451–81) and Bayezid II (1481–1512). This activity depended on providing substantial monetary investments and financial guarantees. A fraction of these lessees, leasing large-size revenue and involving substantial investments, failed to honor their commitments and were subject to lengthy prison terms or even execution. In a few instances, the Jewish communities of Istanbul paid off a portion of the lessee's debts and freed him of liabilities and incarceration. These leases were frequently arranged in partnership with a number of lessees, sometimes taking place between Jews and Muslims or with Christians, and sometimes between a number of Jews, but most often with other Jews acting as guarantors. They leased the imposts and customs of individual port docks or of entire ports, customs on various goods, on mineral products (such as salt, copper, and silver), taxes on whole regions of the Empire (for instance, the poll tax on Christians and Armenians), on branches of industry and trade, and

mints (for example, in Istanbul, Bursa, and Cairo). These leases placed a certain number of Jews in administrative roles, as clerks and supervisors of these activities throughout the Empire. Other Jews served as operational staff, as management and as liaisons to Ottoman military, administrative, and governmental officials close to the sultan or to his court, or to members of the sultan's family who controlled various positions of government or who enjoyed rights over revenue granted to them by the sultan. These lessors, and indeed those Jews who managed and represented the businesses and economic interests of personalities belonging to the ruling circle, in like fashion to the physicians in the sultan's court or the Jewish diplomats in the service of the central government, constituted the highest and wealthiest stratum of Jewish society. Many of them lived and operated in Istanbul, in the port cities of the Empire, and in other central locales in the imperial lands. At the same time, these types of activities also took place in more peripheral locations, in the Balkan region and in Anatolia.[26]

Already, in the course of the fifteenth century, there was a precipitous rise in the number of Jewish immigrants stemming from the Crown of Aragon and from Provence and settling in the territories of the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean regions. The educated stratum of Aragonese Jewry knew Arabic, a factor that eased their absorption into the Mamluk Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire. In the final decade of the fifteenth and the first decade of the sixteenth centuries, the immigrants from Iberia and from the territories of Naples and Apulia also arrived, thereby multiplying the numbers of Jews and complicating the picture considerably. There occurred a dramatic rise in the number of Jewish physicians, bankers, and lessees of every kind, of merchants concentrating on local or on international trade, and of administrators and functionaries who served as managers of their businesses and as the representatives of provincial governmental officials. Thus, for instance, in the central market of Istanbul, 5 Jewish merchants operated shops dealing with imported goods in 1489, while by 1520 their number had risen to 18, as against 123 Muslims and 16 Christians.[27]

The key feature of Jewish business and economic activity in the Ottoman Empire was its openness and the lack of obstacles to pursuing

[26] On the economic activities of Jews in the fifteenth century, see Ḥalil Inalcik, "Jews in the Ottoman Economy and Finances, 1450–1550," in C. E. Bosworth, Charles Issawi, Roger Savory, and A. L. Udovitch, eds., *The Islamic World: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Princeton, 1989), 513–50; Inalcik, "Bursa and the Commerce of the Levant," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3 (1960), 131–47; Mark A. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Freiburg, 1980), 101–49.

[27] See Inalcik, "Jews in the Ottoman Economy," 520.

any and all handicraft, commercial, administrative, and financial activities. Although, according to law, no *dhimmi* was allowed to occupy a position of authority over a Muslim, this principle was more honored in the breach. In contrast, in Christian lands during this period, Jews were confined to commercial activities, prevented from engaging in international trade, and excluded from membership in handicraft guilds, while the citizens throughout Christendom did everything in their power to shackle them. Consequently, Jews there became concentrated in activities devoted to moneylending and credit so as to satisfy the needs of the surrounding society (for instance, in Italy), whereas in the Ottoman Empire, Jews appear more often as borrowers than as lenders.

At present, we lack the sources that would make possible a clear quantitative analysis of the economic activities of Jews and their scope in regard to various pursuits. As a rule, the data at hand permit only descriptions of individual transactions: leases, partnerships, and investments, as well as information on payments or on the compensation from a given transaction or for a particular product sold. At any rate, we lack documentation on the scope of economic activities and their historical development. We must therefore focus on Jews' occupations and professions. For all practical purposes, there was scarcely a single professional field, handicraft, or endeavor which Jews were prevented from pursuing.

The core activities that numerous Jews engaged in and earned their livelihoods from were:

(1) Textile manufacture and clothing production, from which a great many Iberian Jews had also earned their living. With their shift to the Ottoman Empire, hubs for the production of woolen fabrics were established in numerous Jewish population centers soon after their expulsion, such as Salonika, Edirne, Istanbul, Safed, and Magnesia. This industry, in its capitalization, its acquisition of raw materials, and in all stages of manufacture and production occupied thousands of Jewish men and women. The order of magnitude of this industry is reflected in the fact that for decades the Salonikan community satisfied all of the woolen manufacturing needs of the Janissary army (the Ottoman infantry) in accordance with a special arrangement with the authorities. Of course, they were also involved in the trade in textiles, fabrics, and silks.[28]

[28] On Jewish cloth production in the Ottoman Empire, see Benjamin Braude, "The Rise and Fall of Salonica Woollens, 1500–1650: Technology Transfer and Competition," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6, 2 (1991), 216–36; Shemuel Avizur, "Safed, Center of the Manufacture of Woven Woollens in the [Sixteenth] Century" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 6 (1962), 41–69; Gilles Weinstein, "Sur la draperie juive de Salonique (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)," *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 66 (1992–4), 55–62.

(2) Metals were another area of great importance for Jews, and in particular such precious metals as silver and gold. Jews were involved in their production (mining and minting), in the circulation of coinage, in their exchange as currency (this was the main activity of bankers at this time), in their sale, and in their smithing.
(3) Another key activity was the production and marketing of, and local and international trade in, wine for Jews and Christians, as well as in the general production and marketing of kosher foods, meat, and cheese.
(4) Outstanding too were Jewish endeavors in all branches of wholesale, retail trade, and peddling. Their involvement in all branches of commerce and manufacture found expression in their membership in various kinds of professional guilds, covering an array of crafts and trades.[29]

The Jews of the Ottoman Empire were, by and large, city and town dwellers, while only a small number resided in villages and rural regions. The waves of Jewish migrants to the Empire during different stages of the fifteenth century and thereafter, whether voluntary or under compulsion, settled largely in major or middle-sized cities, and especially in port cities that for the most part had lacked a Jewish community following the 1456 transfer of Jews to Istanbul. Thousands of immigrants reached such cities as Salonika and Edirne at the end of the fifteenth century when these locales lacked a Jewish community. The immigrants needed housing. A huge gap emerged between supply and demand, and the immigrants were forced to pay any amount asked for rent or purchase, provided such shelter could even be found. The immigrants of each successive wave agreed to pay more than their predecessors, resulting in the latter's displacement from their homes.

Salonika's communal leaders addressed this economic and social crisis, in opposition to the principles of Jewish law, by granting tenants presumptive rights of occupancy (*ḥezkat diyur*). These rights, akin to what is today called "key money," were granted to every Jewish tenant, and they were prohibited on pain of excommunication from offering a higher rent payment to the owner of a residence currently occupied by a fellow Jew without the latter's agreement. It was likewise prohibited entirely for any Jewish tenant to enter into an apartment that was vacated by its owners and from which the previous Jewish tenant had been evicted. The prohibition was in effect for three years and could be extended to ten if necessary. These restrictions were implemented without informing the Christian or Muslim

[29] On guilds in the Ottoman Empire, see note 23.

owners. Only remuneration (key money) paid to the current tenant and the latter's agreement to evacuate made possible a change of tenancy. A detailed system of regulations was put into place, renewed or modified at different times and in light of changing needs and circumstances, and a legal and administrative body, the *va'ad memunei haḥazakot*, was empowered with exclusive authority to decide in all matters relating to housing. This body supervised the implementation of regulations and authorized any exceptions. It served as the particular and exclusive court for adjudication and clarification of questions of tenancy and housing. These efforts proved effective, and even in Istanbul similar sets of regulations were established and a common council was created for all of the Iberian communities, along with one for the Romaniot.

The Salonikan model spread to every corner of the Empire and was even adopted by Jews in Arab lands and continued to be practiced until the twentieth century.[30] This policy – instituted to address a pressing problem that emerged as a consequence of mass immigration – constituted a brake on the free-market forces of supply and demand within the critical domain of housing, and a protection for the weakest social strata. It is also an example of the remarkable audacity, readiness, and capacity of the Jews to develop practical public economic policies that contradicted the rules of the game and judicial system of the Ottoman state. Their policies struck at the rights of ownership and the free economic activity of the property owners, the great majority of whom were non-Jews. Consequently, they had to maintain such policies in secrecy and successfully hide the very existence of the system they had established and the legislation determining its operation from the eyes of the state.

Another major point on which all Jews in the Ottoman Empire joined for purposes of mutual aid was in the field of taxation.[31] The *jizya* ("poll tax") imposed on the *dhimma* was an obligation enjoined on every head of household (male or widow) and on bachelors starting at a certain age in their teens, one that could not be evaded. To this was added a rich variety of taxes, some of which were linked to the amount of this fundamental tax. As a rule, there were three gradations of taxation relating to the capacities of different taxpayers: the wealthy, the middling, and the poor. As the governmental tax assessments show, in Jewish society across the whole expanse of the Empire, the number of poor greatly exceeded that of the

[30] See Meir Benayahu, "Legal Agreements Concerning 'Ḥazakot' of Courtyards, Houses, and Stores in Salonika and the Rulings of Rabbi Yosef Taitatzaq" [Hebrew], *Michael* 9 (1985), 55–146.

[31] Regarding Ottoman taxation of Jews, see the summary provided by Ben-Naeh, *Jews of the Sultans*, 147–61.

wealthy and the middling combined. Failure to comply in payment of the *Jizya* or other taxes would result in a term of imprisonment until the debt was paid, and in extreme cases could even lead to debt peonage. In the Ottoman Jewish community, in contrast with other groups residing in the Empire, we lack evidence of even a single such case of a Jew sold into debt peonage as a result of the failure to pay tax obligations. In each one of the Empire's Jewish communities, there could be found men of means willing to take on the obligation of paying the taxes of the destitute who could not afford to do so themselves.

For the most part, tax farmers collected taxes from Jews as a group rather than directly from individuals. Every individual congregation, as well as every community as a whole, paid the tax encompassing the obligations of each individual and group on the basis of their respective assessments. For this purpose, some communities even appointed a special individual who would serve as its representative to the tax collector and be responsible for delivering the overall payment.

The Jewish community's economic – and consequently social – disparities were profound. In some cases, a single individual or a handful of individuals held assets that exceeded those of all the rest of the community. Such men of wealth not infrequently sought to dominate public life, whether on the grounds that they bore the fiscal burdens of the many, or simply through their arbitrary power to mobilize clients who were dependent on their favors. There were those who exploited their contacts with the central or regional government to tyrannize over the community. The class divisions that had characterized Iberian Jewish society were hardly erased by the process of emigration to a new land. Aristocratic Jewish families, émigrés from Spain and Portugal, insisted on preserving their exalted status (*yihus*) even in the Ottoman Empire, and the scholarly dynasties behaved no differently. Both alike tried to combine the two qualities of wealth and learning while treating the common folk with utter scorn.[32] For their part, the common people not infrequently descended into criminality, and the extremists among them threatened to reveal to the government the hidden assets of the wealthy if their demands weren't met. The larger Jewish communities attempted to confront the problem of severe poverty and widespread Jewish destitution. The communities' charitable expenditures were considerable, and in places like Salonika or Safed, the community paid for the education, food, and clothing of the city's orphans.

[32] See, for instance, Joseph R. Hacker, "Continuity or Change: The Case of Two Prominent Jewish Portuguese Clans in the Ottoman Empire," in Richard I. Cohen, Natalie B. Dohrmann, Adam Shear, and Elchanan Reiner, eds., *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of David B. Ruderman* (Pittsburg, 2014), 3–17.

The mass immigration of Jews from Christian and Muslim lands – both by force and of free will – to the Ottoman territories, alongside the Empire's expansion via the conquests of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, resulted in the transformation of the composition and character of Ottoman Jewry. Jews distinguished by different languages, different dress, lifestyle, employing different customs and reflecting different cultures encountered one another, were exposed to one another, and were influenced by one another. Even if most tended on the whole to find marriage partners from their own places of origin, the phenomenon of intercommunal marriage was fairly widespread by the first half of the sixteenth century.

Before long, the enormous social and cultural influence of the Iberian immigrants would be felt in the shaping of institutions and public bodies. The Iberian model captured the broader public, including the Romaniot community and those of Provence, France, Sicily, and Italy, and later on even the Musta'arib. Within these various communities, many societies (mutual assistance societies, those devoted to providing for charitable needs,[33] for Torah study, and for various other religious purposes) were established on the Iberian model. Even the nomenclature of the administrative bodies, offices, and regulations passed into "Sephardism." Once that process began, they were referred to by the terms utilized by the Sephardic communities (*ascamot, mahamad, marbitz torah*, and the like). Within this Iberian pattern, the Castilian influence proved paramount in the linguistic domain, in the prayer formulations (*nusaḥ*), in lifestyles, etc. In addition, customs and communal organizations were shaped by the Iberian tradition (the forms and administrative methods of public offices, decision-making processes of majority rule, the tripartite social-class division, the communal legislation, etc.). These institutions, terms, and methods spread from the Iberian communities into the Jewish communities stemming from other lands. Only the Ashkenazim and the Hungarians – as well as a handful of the Romaniot and Musta'arib communities – held firm to their own way of life.

Alongside these processes, there was a great communal tension between populations from different places of origin. The most outstanding conflicts and tensions among the different communities were felt between the emigrants from Portugal and those from Castile, between the Sephardim and the Romaniot, and between the Sephardim and the Musta'arib, as well as between the Maghrebis and the Musta'arib, and not infrequently even between different factions within the same community. These conflicts and tensions generally reflected economic matters (in particular, the just

[33] See Ben-Naeh, *Jews of the Sultans*, 270–85.

division of tax burdens), power struggles over governance (such as selection for membership on the *mahamad*, appointment to the office of *marbitz torah*, and the like), and the real or imagined injuries to the dignity of specific individuals and groups. Any and all of these matters might lead to quarrels and divisions within communities, and at times even precipitate acts of violence. At the same time, communities were conscientious and prepared to succor the needy, to redeem captives, to support Jewish individuals, institutions, and communities in the Land of Israel, and communities within and without the Empire afflicted by crisis.

CULTURE AND LITERARY OUTPUT

The final decades of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries marked a period of great cultural flowering for Ottoman Jews, despite the political upheavals and material hardships that afflicted them. In the wake of the concentration of the Jews in Istanbul after 1456, many scholars also settled in the city. Among them were men of science and philosophy such as R. Moses Capsali, R. Mordechay Comtino, R. Elijah Mizraḥi, R. Yeshaya Messene, R. Elijah Halevi, and others; or individuals who excelled in Torah commentary, homiletics, and poetry, such as R. Ephraim ben Gershon, R. Menaḥem Tamar, and their associates. Alongside this remarkable constellation of Romaniot sages and scholars, a significant number of Karaite scholars lived and worked, many maintaining close ties with their Rabbanite counterparts. These included Elijah and Moses Bashiatzi, Kaleb Afendopulo, Abraham Bali, Joseph Revitzi, Joseph Begi, and their associates.[34] These scholars engaged in substantive discussions and debates both written and oral, copied manuscripts of different compositions for one another, and a portion of them even engaged in teaching philosophy and the sciences to both Rabbanite and Karaite students. Other scholars disseminated Torah in the general public and in the academies, and produced novelae, clarifications of Talmud passages, as well as responsa. This atmosphere of cultural and spiritual efflorescence evolved against the backdrop of the growth of Istanbul and its development as a governmental and urban center that thrived in the days of Mehmed II and Bayezid II, and in the framework of the incorporation of Rabbanite and Karaite Jews into the economic and administrative structure of the Ottoman state.

[34] On the Karaite intellectuals, see Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, vol. II (Philadelphia, 1935), 292–315; Daniel J. Lasker, *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi: Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy* (Leiden, 2008), 96–122, 263–4.

The intellectual and scholarly scene in Ottoman Jewish society was entirely transformed within a period of twenty years or so. The immigrants who arrived en masse and their leaders quickly established educational institutions wherever they settled in the Ottoman Empire. They built Jewish primary schools (*talmudei torah*) and academies, and they created countless study houses. Large numbers of scholars were trained, including groups who pursued the study of speculative thought, science, philosophy, and literature, in accord with the models that had previously been established in Aragon and Castile. In this manner, there emerged Jewish cultural centers even beyond the precincts of Istanbul, in the Balkan towns and Anatolia: in Salonika, Edirne, Serres, Sophia, Vidin, Nicopol, Bursa, and Magnesia. Whereas, prior to the great immigration, the general public was largely indifferent to the intellectual and scholarly activity of the small rabbinic and talmudic elite, now the intellectual and spiritual ferment broadened considerably and penetrated into the life of the general public. An outstanding development of these years was the establishment of academies in Salonika, Istanbul, Adrianople, Jerusalem, Safed, Cairo, and Damascus that employed the style and methodology of those that had once flourished in Castile.

The arrival of large numbers of intellectuals and scholars from different regions greatly enriched the spiritual life of the Jewish community. Their concentration and encounter with one another in a new setting helped to stimulate fresh thinking and intellectual vitality. We possess abundant evidence pointing to such effervescence and to the broader public's involvement in it.[35] The Iberian emigrants, particularly those who left Portugal, established publishing houses in places like Istanbul and Salonika which printed hundreds of books starting in the final decade of the fifteenth century. Wealthy individuals, for the most part exiles themselves or their descendants, helped to subsidize these publications. These printing houses printed basic texts of Jewish culture and tradition, such as Bibles and commentaries, the Talmud, codes of Jewish law (such as those of Maimonides and the "Tur" of Rabbi Jacob ben Asher), grammatical treatises, homiletic works, works of philosophy and ethics, midrashic collections and responsa literature, prayer books, and works on Jewish customs and belles-lettres. Until the middle of the sixteenth century, only a small smattering of works by contemporary authors had been published, while the

[35] On the intellectual activity and spiritual ferment of Ottoman Jewry in this period, see Joseph R. Hacker, "The Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 95–135.

vast majority of published works were those of medieval Iberian Jewish authors.[36]

Among the other endeavors of the intellectual stratum within Iberian-Jewish society in the Ottoman Empire were the accumulation and copying of Jewish cultural treasures, making them available to the scholarly and intellectual community in the manner of "public" libraries. Courtiers and intimates of the rulers, as well as the wealthy and scholarly families, brought with them such Jewish and non-Jewish treasures in the course of their migration. Among these individuals were men who continued to acquire manuscripts and printed works from their associates, and even hired scribes to copy writings and opened their libraries for the use of sages and scholars.[37] An atmosphere of support for book culture was fostered, and the members of the highest stratum patronized the authors and their works. More important still, however, in every community Jewish schools were established, and some of the communities also built academies, reflecting public concern with supporting study for orphans and the children of the poor. At the same time, members of the wealthiest strata and families of scholars pursued scientific and theoretical education under private tutelage. (It should be noted that, despite all this, only daughters from wealthy or scholarly families could hope for a proper education, and women were not counted as part of the scholarly community.) Effective teaching methods resulted in some remarkable academic accomplishments. Testimony from members of other communities supports the impression that the instructional approach to teaching Scripture in Ladino, as well as the tools and commentaries that had been effectively utilized for the instruction of Jewish youth in Iberia, now achieved rapid results in the education of broad sectors of Jewish society.

The immigrants themselves preserved and perpetuated their creativity, though not merely in the domain of high culture, such as in speculative and talmudic thought, but also in the realm of popular culture, folklore, and Ladino literature.[38] They continued to read belles-lettres in Castilian,

[36] On Hebrew printing in the Ottoman Empire of the sixteenth century, see Joseph R. Hacker, "Authors, Readers and Printers of Sixteenth-Century Hebrew Books in the Ottoman Empire," in Peggy K. Pearlstein, ed., *Perspectives on the Hebrew Book: The Myron M. Weinstein Memorial Lectures at the Library of Congress* (Washington, DC, 2012), 16–63.

[37] See Joseph R. Hacker, "Public Libraries of Hispanic Jewry in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods," in Joseph R. Hacker, Yosef Kaplan, and Benjamin Z. Kedar, eds., *From Sages to Savants: Studies Presented to Avraham Grossman* (Jerusalem, 2010) [Hebrew], 263–83.

[38] On the language of Ladino and the books in Ladino written and printed in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, see David M. Bunis, "The Language of the Sephardim: A Historical Overview," in Beinart, ed., *Moreshet Sepharad*, 399–407; Dov Cohen, "Who is the Author of the Ladino Shulḥan ha-Panim (Salonica 1568)?" [Hebrew], *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 11(2015), 33–61.

including material produced in Spain after the expulsion, such as drama, chivalric tales, poetry, and the like. Ballads were composed and missives written in Ladino, Castilian, and Portuguese.[39] On the other hand, the influence of Ottoman culture is also apparent, particularly in the field of poetry, singing, and musical composition.[40] Likewise evident is the attraction of the general population to the folkways of the surrounding society, its popular festivities, pilgrimages to gravesites and other local holy places, and the like.

In the speculative writings, in the Torah commentaries and in the homiletic literature of this period, one can discern a clear philosophical tendency, whereas we see a lack of kabbalistic writings and authors in the Ottoman Empire until the third quarter of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, there was a great flowering and prolific production in the rabbinic and halakhic fields, in jurisprudence, exegesis, novelae, responsa literature, and the like. An extensive literature of scriptural exegesis, homiletics on the Torah, commentary on rabbinic aggadah and midrash also emerged – all of it exhibiting a speculative and philosophical character. Also composed were analyses of Rashi's Torah commentary, likewise extending a genre that had been prominent in fifteenth-century Spain. By way of a general conclusion, one can say that the broad orientation to science and study of the Talmud, the speculative and philosophical tendencies, as well as the attraction to belletristic literature all essentially mark a perpetuation of the forms, values, and substance of Jewish cultural productivity from fifteenth-century Spain.

EPILOGUE

By the 1540s, the first generation of Iberian immigrants had become entrenched. At the same time, with the rise of a new generation (those who either had arrived as children or were born in the Empire), distinctive patterns become apparent. The period between the 1540s and 1580s–1590s marks the apex of Ottoman Jewry's economic and cultural development.

[39] Eleazar Gutwirth, "On the Hispanicity of Sephardi Jewry," *Revue des Études Juives* (*REJ*) 145 (1986), 347–57; Gutwirth, "'Coplas de Josef' from the Genizah," *REJ* 155 (1996), 387–400; Gutwirth, "Sephardi Culture of the 'Cairo Genizah People' (Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)," *Michael* 14 (1997), 9–34; Gutwirth, "Language and Medicine in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire," in Jürgen Helm and Annette Winkelmann, eds., *Religious Confessions and the Sciences in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden, 2001), 79–95.

[40] See, for instance, Edwin Serousi, "From the Court and Tarikat to the Synagogue: Ottoman Art Music and Hebrew Sacred Songs," in Andres Hammarlund, Tord Olsson, and Elisabeth Özdalga, eds., *Sufism, Music and Society in Turkey and the Middle East,* Transactions of the Swedish Research Institute 10 (Istanbul, 1997), 81–96.

Outstanding personalities, particularly in Istanbul, achieved positions of stature and influence in governmental institutions that far transcended the Jewish world. This phase saw a remarkable flowering of intellectual and religious creativity, including the publication of a rich and varied body of literature in such fields as Halakhah, exegesis, homiletics, linguistics, grammar, and poetry. The contemporaneous Jewish world, including northern and eastern Europe, could offer no parallel to the sheer extent, range, and depth of this intellectual richness. At the same time, a number of phenomena left their stamp on future generations of Ottoman Jews as well as on the broader Jewish world.

We can discern certain shifts in the consciousness of the intellectuals within Ottoman Jewish society which to all appearances reflect a change occurring more broadly within Jewish society – namely, an increasing identification with the Ottoman Empire and the growth of a local Jewish patriotism. This emotional and spiritual connection with the new places in which Iberian Jews resettled emerged despite the persistence of their powerful connection with "Sepharad" and its culture.[41] At the same time, a situation now emerged in which a small number of locales came to play a determinative role in the broad social, cultural, and religious life of Ottoman Jewry as a whole. The four main ones were Salonika, Istanbul, Cairo, and Safed. These centers (although our knowledge regarding Cairo in this respect is minimal) promulgated legislation that was then typically reinforced by other, smaller communities. The era's intellectual giants and scholarly authorities resided in them. In their academies, students and young scholars were raised and trained, who would eventually become "disseminators of Torah" throughout the Empire. The principal works of the period were composed and printed there, and such centers were marked by rich intellectual life and vitality. In a more limited fashion, local centers also emerged in other cities, such as Bursa, Adrianople, Nikopol, and Damascus.

From the 1520s, the community of Safed grew from approximately 1,000 souls to a figure of around 8,000 at its peak (in the third quarter of the century). Hundreds of scholars who had migrated within and outside the Empire – including North Africa, Italy, and other lands – were channeled into and concentrated within this community. Outstanding among these were the Torah scholars and kabbalists who stemmed from Salonika and

[41] Joseph R. Hacker, "Local Patriotism of Spanish Exiles in the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," in E. Fleischer, G. Blidstein, C. Horowitz, and B. Septimus, eds., *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky* (Jerusalem, 2001) [Hebrew], 349–69.

Adrianople.[42] The Jewish community of Safed displayed a singular religious and spiritual character, one that found expression in a great emotional intensity of religious life, which in time would sweep up many Diaspora communities as well. This pronounced character was especially felt in and facilitated by the circles of R. Solomon Alkabetz and R. Moses Cordovero and their disciples, and the circle of R. Isaac Luria and his students. Members of the Safed community reformed the Jewish calendar by weaving into it new (and renewed) festivals, while also inserting new and previously unknown texts and interpretations into the traditional prayers. The hagiographic literature emanating from Safed, the liturgical poetry composed by its luminaries (such as R. Solomon Alkabetz, R. Isaac Luria, and R. Elazar Azikri), the ritualistic practices and pietism, kabbalistic *musar* literature, pietistic and penitential customs – all of these produced a novel religious style, character, and spirit. This spirit and its characteristic literature partly displaced the speculative philosophical thought and the "rationalist" outlook that had been the inheritance of the Iberian emigrants, which now had to make room for the Kabbalah of the Zohar of Cordovero and his school, and eventually of Luria and his disciples. Henceforth, commentaries, theoretical writings, and sermons were more often padded with rabbinic and kabbalistic material, while links with Greek, Jewish, or Arabic-influenced scientific and philosophical literature declined.

Likewise, within a remarkably short time, the work of R. Joseph Karo, his *Beit Yosef* and *Shulḥan Arukh*, managed to become authoritative throughout the Jewish world, in spite of specific criticisms and reservations, and even came to be viewed as a landmark in the formation of accepted halakhic and behavioral norms in Jewish society as a whole. Criteria that were accepted by the rabbinic and halakhic world of Iberian Jews in the Ottoman Empire were now applied as well to Ashkenazic society and were thus transformed into the broad accepted standard governing Jewish society.

In other words, the new Diaspora – Ottoman Jewry – redefined itself during the third quarter of the sixteenth century and stamped its impression deeply on its descendants. More than this, it succeeded in exerting a profound influence on the entirety of world Jewry. It is hardly surprising, then, that some individuals among the Ottoman Jews even sought to intervene in fundamental political matters taking place beyond the borders of the Empire. How are we otherwise to understand the efforts of R. Jacob Berav and his colleagues in 1538 to create in Safed a centralized rabbinic

[42] Joseph R. Hacker, "Links Between Salonican Jews and the Community of Safed in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" [Hebrew], *Shalem* 8 (2008), 249–326.

authority for all Jews through the restoration of formal rabbinic ordination, or the international endeavors by individuals in Istanbul to involve themselves in the selection of a Polish king (1587), or to punish the Papal State by imposing a boycott on its port of Ancona in the wake of the burning of *conversos* there (1556)? Thus, within some eighty years, a community that had been formed against the backdrop of mass migration at the end of the fifteenth century was able to reconstitute itself into an integral civilization in which the Iberian element predominated.

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CHAPTER 4

THE SHIFTING LEGAL AND POLITICAL STATUS OF EARLY MODERN JEWRIES

ANDREAS GOTZMANN

Any attempt to describe the basic aspects and development of the legal history of Judaism in early modern times faces several challenges. First of all, the appropriate chronological definition of this era differs quite a lot from region to region. For western Ashkenazic communities and the Holy Roman Empire, the Thirty Years' War is often seen as a watershed between late medieval and early modern times because the economic opportunities, legal circumstances, and, as a result, the geographical distribution of the Jewish population here changed decisively in the seventeenth century. But for the Italian communities, the Renaissance might prove to be a more appropriate starting point, while the duration of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth certainly defined a distinctive era for the Jewish societies of eastern Europe. While some general aspects of how non-Jewish societies approached their Jewish populations in this period were quite similar, we also find vast differences that are related to many factors – for instance, between the Jewish communities of the Holy Roman Empire and those of the Ottoman Empire, or the situation within the Moroccan kingdom vis-à-vis Jewish life in Yemen. Any approach, therefore, has to focus on specific periods and locations to be able to draw any conclusions and give detailed information, as amongst the multitude of early modern Jewish settlements, even within the Holy Roman Empire, the differences were vast. In many cases, only a micro-analytical perspective allows us to understand the interactions and dynamics of Christian–Jewish relations as well as the factors that defined the practices and norms of Jewish life.

While the overall focus of this chapter will be on developments within the Holy Roman Empire, comparisons with the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in particular will be made. For an initial comparative perspective, though, let us briefly consider the legal approach toward Jews in Muslim countries. In its general conception, this did not differ very much from the theological and legal norms set by Christian scholars for dealing with the Jewish populations under their rule. Both cultural traditions – the Christian as well as the Muslim – defined their relation to Judaism in religious

terms, assigning Judaism a specific position and role within their religious histories and theological concepts. As Islam had spread quite rapidly at its outset, the new Muslim rulers often had to cope with large Christian and Jewish populations that could not be converted in their totality. To enable these communities to coexist with Islam as the dominant religion, Muslim scholars made use of their own historical narrative, which incorporated Christianity and Judaism and allowed for some acknowledgment of these religions. This particular concept of the "people of the book" underpinned the coexistence of different Christian denominations as well as the Jewish populations within Muslim societies, as both were defined as inferior belief systems but nonetheless as predecessors of Islam. This theological classification was directly reflected in the limited social and legal status of members of these groups, which were tolerated on circumscribed terms, being forced to pay special taxes and having to endure specific restrictions with respect to their economic activities as well as their settlement rights. Although this basic concept framed the treatment of all Jews in Muslim countries, all of these factors could differ significantly according to space and time.[1]

In Christian lands, it was the so-called concept of Augustine that allowed Jews to exist under Christian rule. Again, Judaism was integrated into the historical self-understanding of the dominant group, here under the theological concept of the "former chosen people," a status that was now claimed by Christianity. As negative as this appraisal of Judaism certainly was, Christian theologians also took the existence of Jews as permanent historical evidence for the claim of Christianity to be the only true religion. This enabled the existence and survival of Jewish communities under Christian rule, because ruling over these mostly small Jewish populations was perceived as a proof of the religious claim that Christianity had prevailed over Judaism. As in the Islamic world, Jewish existence under such theological preconditions entailed less favorable legal treatment and economic restrictions, combined with restrictive settlement policies.

TERMS OF TOLERATION

Beyond these basic concepts of toleration, the differing historical developments in different cultural realms led to decisive variations in the social

[1] Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Philadelphia, 1979), 20, 25, 149, 157–8, 159–61; Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, 1984), 20–51; Bat Yeor, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam,* 7th edn. (Cranbury, NJ, 2005); Minna Rozen, "Strangers in a Strange Land: The Extraterritorial Status of Jews in Italy and the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in Aron Rodrigue, ed., *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership* (Bloomington, 1992), 123–66.

status of Jews across Europe and the Mediterranean, and even within the Holy Roman Empire. The legal status of European Jewry in early modern times followed on from the important changes that had already taken place in medieval times. In the aftermath of the medieval destructions of Jewish communities, the Jews' general status as citizens according to Roman law had been replaced by a quite different one that tied them closely to the authorities.[2] Being pronounced "serfs to the imperial chamber" (*Kammerknechte*) put them in a special position within the legal architecture of the Empire. Initially, this change was meant to secure their existence, as the emperor himself would now guarantee the security of Jewish lives and property. But, at the same time, it defined them as strangers who had to acquire a time-limited right of settlement and refuge. Apart from a specific protection tax (*Schutzgeld*), Jews now had to pay many other taxes. Some had to be paid for specific commodities or privileges, while others were imposed only on the Jewish population or levied on them at a higher rate over the early modern period as their existence became tied even closer to the economic needs of the Christian authorities. Jewish taxes actually became a significant factor in the increasing appetite for financial support of the Emperor, princes, and other rulers. This was intensified by the fact that the Emperor had granted to a multitude of rulers the privilege to admit Jews and to impose taxes upon them. Nonetheless, the fundamental idea that the Emperor remained the protector of the Jews was, over and again, taken up as the basis for the imperial chamber's claim on the levies that were imposed on the Jewish population. As this was not in the best interest of the local authorities to whom the specific privilege of granting admission had been passed – which included the nobility, the religious dominions, imperial towns, even the gentry and the knights – these fought against such encroachments on their rights and subsidies. Although the Emperor had mostly lost direct influence in this respect, recent research shows that the Empire retained considerable importance for the Jewish population. This is underscored by the fact that the majority of Jews lived in territories with specific ties to the Emperor. As the right to issue letters of toleration (*Schutzbriefe*) to Jewish communities or individuals had become part of a sovereign's privileges and of his authority as a territorial lord, it was sometimes exercised just to document this status even though the economic profit from Jewish taxes was negligible. The key legal concept nonetheless

[2] Michael Toch, *Die Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Munich, 1998), 47–55, 102–10; Andreas Gotzmann and Stephan Wendehorst, eds., *Juden im Recht: Neue Zugänge zur Rechtsgeschichte der Juden im Alten Reich*, special issue of *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, Beihefte 39 (Berlin, 2007).

remained untouched: Jews were serfs to the imperial chamber, even though their dependency had in fact shifted to local rulers.[3]

The contents of these letters of toleration show at least a few consistent features: they declare the toleration of Jewish settlement at a defined place in return for an annual protection tax. These contracts were also limited to a fixed duration, after which they had to be renegotiated. The concession of toleration specifically included the right to observe Jewish religious practices, quite often forbidding the coercive conversion of Jews to Christianity. However, this religious license did not necessarily imply the right to hold public services. But communal prayers in private homes, at least, and certainly key specifics of Jewish ritual life, such as kosher slaughtering or the provision of a ritual bath, were seen as indispensable parts of this right. Nevertheless, many regulations limited these concessions for a wide variety of reasons – for instance, restricting the amount of cattle that could be slaughtered, because of a concern that surplus and non-kosher meat would be sold to the non-Jewish public, infringing upon the business of Christian butchers. Even the right to open a Jewish cemetery often had to be requested specifically, and was usually granted upon additional payments. Another indispensable aspect of the admittance of Jews was the concession for them to earn their livelihood, although the professions and the character of their activities were usually highly restricted and clearly defined. The right to security, for self, family, and property, formed another intrinsic part of the idea of toleration, which was so widely accepted that it was often understood even without being explicitly stated.[4]

Beyond the basic legal concepts that defined the fundamentals of Jewish existence in Christian states, Jewish individuals and communities – like any

[3] Andreas Gotzmann, Stefan Ehrenpreis, and Stephan Wendehorst, "Probing the Legal History of the Jews in the Holy Roman Empire: Norms and their Application," Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 2 (2003), 409–87; Andreas Gotzmann and Stephan Wendehorst, "Zwischen Kaiser, Landesherrschaft und Halacha: Zwischenräume als jüdische Rechts- und Handlungsspielräume," in Gotzmann and Wendehorst, eds., *Juden im Recht*, 1–8; Andreas Gotzmann, Stefan Ehrenpreis, and Stephan Wendehorst, "Von den Rechtsnormen zur Rechtspraxis: Ein neuer Zugang zur Rechtsgeschichte der Juden im Heiligen Römischen Reich?" in Birgit Feldner, Verena Halbwachs, Thomas Olechowski, and Josef Pauser, eds., *Ad Fontes. Europäisches rechtshistorisches Forum* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002), 97–119.

[4] Andreas Gotzmann, *Jüdische Autonomie in der Frühen Neuzeit: Recht und Gemeinschaft im deutschen Judentum* (Göttingen, 2008), 25–144; Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. and foreword by Bernhard D. Cooperman (Syracuse, NY, 2000); Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation (1770–1870)* (Cambridge, MA, 1973); Asriel Schochat, *Im Chilufe Tekufot: Reschit ha-Haskala be-Jahadut Germania* (Jerusalem, 1960); Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750*, 3rd edn. (London, 1998).

other person or social group – had to negotiate further entitlements within the complex early modern corporative social order, which was not committed to the idea of equality. Many rights could be purchased as long as they did not contradict one's relevant social status, and again quite a few were perceived by Christians as typical, or even necessary, features of the toleration of Jews.[5] These legal aspects became somewhat standardized and, together with a range of legal practices, formed the vaguely defined corpus of Christian Jewry law. While early modern scholars wrote a considerable number of legal treatises on the position and treatment of Jews in Christian lands, only a few of these books – among them some quasi-ethnographic, mostly anti-Jewish descriptions of Jewish life and mores – were actually used in practice. Local administrations would rather ask the governments of other states or towns that were known to host larger Jewish communities how things were organized there, thereby creating an informal, flexible notion of how, with respect to Jews, things should be done. Jewish communities could also appeal to these general practices in conflicts with their overlords.[6]

Privileges could be issued to individuals, to specific communities, or to part or all of the Jewish population of a territorial state. They were conferred by the territorial sovereign; in shared territories and in cases of overlapping or competing claims of power, joint or parallel privileges could be handed out. Additionally, the Emperor himself would sometimes bestow all Jews with a general letter of protection. It was quite common for well-off Jewish businessmen to hold many privileges from different sovereigns, including even the emperor, and sometimes also several letters of protection. This would widen the opportunities for them to choose where to live, how to conduct their business, or to travel unhindered. Poorer Jews tried to achieve more security by living in the heterogeneous, sometimes co-owned, small territories of the lesser nobility and imperial knights. Here the cost of letters of protection and the overall tax burden often were much lower, and the possibilities of finding refuge in a nearby territory in times of severe conflicts, pogroms or even expulsions were higher. The majority of the large rural Jewish population in this period resided in small estates and heterogeneous possessions of this kind in the southwestern parts of the Empire.[7]

[5] Friedrich J. Battenberg, *Die Juden in Deutschland vom 16. bis zum Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2001), 14–16, 79–82; Dietmar Willoweit, "Die Rechtsstellung der Juden," in Arye Maimon, Mordechai Breuer, and Yacov Guggenheim, eds., *Germania Judaica*, III, 3 (Tübingen, 2003), 2165–207.

[6] Guido Kisch, "Jüdisches Recht und Judenrecht," in Kisch, "Forschungen zur Rechts- und Sozialgeschichte der Juden in Deutschland während des Mittelalters," in Kisch, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. I, 2nd edn. (Siegmaringen, 1978), 187–98.

[7] Gotzmann, *Autonomie*, 25–478; Friedrich J. Battenberg, "Rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen jüdischer Existenz in der Frühneuzeit zwischen Reich und Territorium," in Rolf Kießling and

Although issuing privileges was a unilateral act of governance, many documented instances show that the Jewish side frequently had some say, and established Jewish communities could even ask for alterations and ameliorations afterwards. In such petitions, it was common for the Jewish side to have to promise special payments, e.g. for the relief of the often severe restrictions on Jewish commerce, if they were to stand a chance of success. Sometimes a petition would point to specific religious customs and ask for certain concessions, such as the right to employ a *Shabbes-goyete* ("Sabbath-worker"). If certain prohibitions threatened economic survival, a community could apply for less rigid restrictions or for the adjournment of payment, implying that otherwise there would be less or no revenue coming from the Jews. While the outcome of such special requests was often unpredictable, the Jewish side could rely on certain givens and would be able to secure certain standards by appealing to established local or regional custom. The legal forms in which such rights were coined had already been defined in medieval times. As was the case in society in general, there were corporative as well as individual Jewish privileges, and quite often these would exist parallel to each other, even inside a single community. Sometimes privileges worked according to a certain hierarchy but quite often they were conflicting, creating a multitude of different personal and communal rights. If we list these general legal documents systematically, the most basic was the individual writ of toleration issued to a single person. In general, it would be given to a male person, the *pater familias*, and would include his household with his wife and children, and a specified number of servants – at times even including further relatives, and a teacher or a rabbi, all of whom would be excluded from doing business on their own. This right could be passed on to his widow, but not necessarily to the next generation. Usually one child, typically only a male, would be granted some claim to be accepted instead of his father, or in addition to him, all under certain preconditions such as minimum financial means and a good reputation. Some of these writs would simply name the person, the annual tax, and the duration of the contract. Most of them also included the person's profession, while others were more detailed. Further privileges would directly relate to specifics like certain liberties of commerce. Beyond these individualized documents, there existed privileges for local communities. Finally, there were general privileges for parts or all of the Jewish population of a given state, which often extended to detailed legal codes with hundreds of paragraphs. Especially in larger communities or Jewish

Sabine Ullmann, eds., *Judengemeinden in Schwaben im Kontext des Alten Reiches,* Colloquia Augustana 2 (Berlin, 1995), 53–79.

rural confederations, these external legal documents were increasingly paralleled by intra-Jewish regulations.[8]

Although the Jewish side as well as the Christian authorities perceived each other as clearly distinct and their legal spheres somehow as independent, such external general privileges began to include aspects that referred to internal Jewish agreements and even to Jewish religious law, while Jewish community by-laws and stipulations in general complied with the framework defined by these privileges. The need to define an administrative counterpart on the Jewish side required this close interaction of the external and the internal spheres. As a result, the privileges for a community could include regulations about who could be elected at what time, defining internal hierarchies and the relevant duties of each post, sometimes also fixing court fees or supporting the prerogative of Jewish authorities to exercise coercive power. The growing instrumentalization of the Jewish administration could even go as far as a public approval of internal *takkanot* ("communal ordinances"), and in many cases state authorities supported intra-Jewish regulations and authority structures, for example, to prevent internal strife.[9]

The more complex and detailed these privileges became during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the more Jewish existence appears to have been regulated by these external laws. While this seems to be the case especially in territories or cities with old Jewish communities, as the need to resolve conflicts and define far-ranging perspectives led to a noticeable growth of regulations that interpreted the privileges, the rural settlements were instead integrated into the general local administration, as small Jewish communities could hardly maintain distinct or competing administrative structures. This growing legal body was used as a legal precedent, and, together with the accumulated decrees, it formed a corpus of amendments to the privileges that defined legal practice, while remaining nonetheless heterogeneous. As the financial exploitation of the Jewish population was of greatest interest to sovereigns, economic regulations were most important to them. With the rise of absolutist politics, other matters became decisive as well. Jewish professions and trades were increasingly regulated, while strict controls attempted to check criminality. Jewish trade, especially peddling, as well as moneylending and currency trading, were regarded with growing mistrust, as they were perceived to be dishonest activities.[10] A rapid criminalization of

[8] Andreas Gotzmann, "At Home in Many Worlds? Thoughts about New Concepts in Jewish Legal History," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 2 (2003), 412–36.

[9] Andreas Gotzmann, "Gemeinde als Gemeinschaft? Politische Konzepte im deutschen Judentum des Absolutismus," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 1 (2002), 375–430.

[10] Israel, *Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*; Michael Toch, "Wirtschaft und Geldwesen der Juden Frankfurts im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit," in Karl-Erich Grözinger, ed., *Jüdische Kultur in Frankfurt am Main von den Anfängen bis zur*

considerable parts of Jewish society took place in early modern times, which is reflected in the privileges and the growing number of police ordinances.[11] Endless paragraphs were directed against the vast number of poor Jews, especially those who were forced to wander permanently as beggars as they had no opportunity to gain a letter of protection and become a full member of a Jewish community. While Jewish communities made enormous attempts to help their brethren – focusing firstly on paupers within their communities and then on the itinerant poor, and often even joining in transcommunal efforts to help other communities in times of economic strife and war – they had to secure their economic survival while at the same time yielding to the regulations of the government that tried to exclude foreign Jews, especially criminal elements and the poor and sick, from their territory. Similar attempts were made to regulate Jewish population growth and migration, by fixing rigid head-counts for Jewish households or asking for high admission fees for new arrivals.[12]

The special privileges that secured certain economic, legal, or mobility rights for Jewish individuals, but also for rabbis and community elders, sometimes conflicted with the rights granted to the community, or even with the interests of non-Jewish administrations, such as the commissions that were founded to deal with the taxation of the Jewish population and which often also tried minor legal disputes amongst Jews. Just as the early modern Holy Roman Empire and the territorial states within it were governed by a multitude of differing laws, even assigning certain legal functions to confederations such as guilds and churches, it is important to understand that the treatment of the Jewish minority, too, was anything but systematic. Especially in smaller dominions which did not have the means for a sophisticated administration, the tendency was to find pragmatic solutions rather than establishing precise and specific legal provisions and structures. This proved to be less problematic, as Jews were integrated into the general legal system of the Empire in much the same way as other social corporations. This was the case in matters that were always regulated on a transterritorial level, such as the criminal law, which was administered according to the imperial criminal code, the so-called *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina*. Legal disputes between Jews and Christians always

Gegenwart, Jüdische Kultur: Studien zur Geistesgeschichte, Religion und Literatur 1 (Wiesbaden, 1997), 25–46.

[11] Karl Härter, "Zur Stellung der Juden im frühneuzeitlichen Strafrecht. Gesetzgebung, Rechtswissenschaft und Justizpraxis," in Gotzmann and Wendehorst, eds., *Juden im Recht*, 347–82.

[12] Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, François Guesnet, Gertrud Pickhan, Andreas Reinke, and Desanka Schwara, eds., *Juden und Armut in Mittel- und Osteuropa* (Cologne, 2000).

had to be brought to Christian courts, where they were tried according to common law and custom.

A valued clause in some Jewish privileges was the right to be tried in specific courts, usually under the authority that issued the letter of protection, even in cases arising in other territories. Jewish communities and individuals with specific connections to the Emperor or certain jurisdictions, such as the old Jewish community of Frankfurt am Main, held the right to be exclusively tried by those jurisdictions, mainly in local municipal courts. Under certain conditions, the Frankfurt community had the possibility of applying to the highest courts in the Empire, the Imperial Chamber Court (Reichskammergericht) or even the Imperial Aulic Council (Reichshofrat). Similar rights applied to numerous Jewish as well as non-Jewish individuals and communities throughout the Empire, who used these privileges quite frequently. While this certainly is an important aspect of Jewish political and legal action inside the multilayered power structure of early modern society, most legal disputes remained within the local arena and were decided by Christian courts, simply because the vast majority of the comparatively small Jewish population of the Empire (approximately 40,000 people at the beginning of the seventeenth century) made its living through business transactions with Christians.[13]

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN COURTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS

Apart from these charters, there existed certain other legal documents that defined Jewish life in this period. Amongst the best-known are the travel permits. Based on the concept of protection, both Christians and Jews had to acquire the right of transit and shelter for any travel through foreign territories. These travel permits held special importance for the Jewish population, due to their predominance as peddlers and long-distance traders. Moreover, Jews alone had to pay an additional custom duty on their own body whenever they crossed a border, comparable to the toll one had to pay for merchandise or cattle. Jewish contemporaries perceived this peculiar tax as a humiliation, as it was clearly designed to be precisely that.

A similar legal practice that pertained only to Jews and was intended as a humiliation, publicly demonstrating the low esteem and status of Judaism, derived from a fundamental question: could Christian courts trust an oath taken by members of a different faith, as sworn statements were understood

[13] Dean Phillip Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World* (Lanham, MD, 2008), 46–50; Battenberg, *Juden in Deutschland*, 10–13.

to be sanctioned by one specific transcendental power, here the Christian God? The idea of Judaism as a negative counterpart to Christianity had led to anti-Jewish definitions of a specific "Jewish oath" in medieval times, which included many humiliating rituals.[14] While this degrading oath existed until the nineteenth century, those rituals were only enforced in rare cases that were intended as public disparagements of the Jewish religion. In everyday legal proceedings, Jews had to take various oaths, and many of these were defined by the state in specified forms. These adopted parts of halakhic formulas, adding curses and maledictions, preferably from biblical literature as this was sacred to both religious traditions. In cases where an active Jewish community and a rabbinate existed, such oaths – even if requested by Christian courts – had to be made in the presence of the rabbi in the synagogue, sometimes even on the Torah. While the legal perspective understood this as an act accorded to the Christian legal system, the use of rabbinic formulas and inner-Jewish authorities again points to the close ties between both spheres.

Although Judaism and Jewish religious practice were held in negative regard, a much more pragmatic approach was taken in the everyday administrative and legal context. The toleration of Jews already entailed that Christian authorities could not interfere in the Jewish religious realm. This concept was strengthened by the impact of the Reformation, especially after the Thirty Years' War, when states that held populations of different Christian confessions agreed to compromise: while the sovereign held some authority over the Church he belonged to, any authority in religious matters would fall to the relevant religious authorities if the ruler was a member of a different faith. This concept began to influence administrative policies toward Jewish communities as well. A similar shift was also promoted by the professionalization of public jurisdiction. With the growing involvement of university-trained solicitors in court proceedings and public administration, the reintroduction of concepts of Roman law renewed the idea that Jews in fact were citizens and, as such, held certain rights. An outcome of this change of legal thought can be seen in the fact that now even poor – and certainly old – Jews who were not able to pay their taxes stood a chance of escaping eviction if they were known as honest people. Even attempts to expel the entire Jewish population from a

[14] Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish–Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1995); Dean Phillip Bell, *Sacred Communities: Jewish and Christian Communities in 15th-Century Germany,* Studies in Central European Histories 23 (Boston, 2001); Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett, eds., *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Boston, 2006).

territory were countered by such arguments, from the Jewish but also from the Christian side. The perception of the Jew as a foreigner slowly gave way to other concepts that were linked to the idea of Jews being long-established and thus having acquired a certain right of residence, and this reassessment actually accorded with Jewish concepts of status and belonging. Especially at the local level, there are many instances of stable coexistence, cooperation, and even of mutual respect in the relationships between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations or between Jewish and public administrations, notwithstanding abiding differences and mistrust.[15]

The dividing line between the external legal system and intra-Jewish legal competence was never clear-cut. Even the legal provisions for Jews that, by nature, acted as a segregating factor show aspects of interrelation and interaction. While matters of Jewish ritual such as *kashrut* and questions pertaining to religious worship remained under the authority of the rabbinate, the legal concept of "religious affairs" (*Ceremonialia*) nevertheless assigned aspects of Jewish religious life, such as the question of whether a synagogue could be built, to Christian authorities, and sometimes even to Catholic or Protestant consistories. Much more complicated were matters of family law and the laws of succession. Both fields of law were understood on the Christian side to be *religious ceremonies*, which relegated them to Jewish religious law. Although all states understood the acts of marriage and divorce to be part of Jewish ritual and therefore of Jewish law, Christian interpretations could sometimes collide with Jewish readings of biblical texts. Such discrepancies between the Christian idea of a Mosaic law pertaining to the Pentateuch alone and actual rabbinic law illustrate the widespread Christian misconception of contemporary Judaism. As a result, marriages between cousins – a preferred option amongst Jews – were sometimes prohibited, as Christians understood these unions to be incestuous and forbidden by the Bible. An example of the overlapping of legal spheres is the recurring debate over which court was competent to deal with Jewish law suits that arose from divorces. Though the divorce ritual itself pertained only to rabbinic courts – who understood this to be a predominantly legal act – Christian courts would try Jewish divorce claims. Depending on shifting opinion on the Christian side as to whether Jewish marriage was understood primarily as a religious ritual or rather as an act of purchase – the latter being closer to the Jewish perception – such cases would sometimes even be relegated to church consistories, but usually would be accepted by general public courts,

[15] Wilhelm Güde, *Die rechtliche Stellung der Juden in den Schriften deutscher Juristen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Sigmaringen, 1981).

even though Jewish authorities claimed them as matters that were religious in character. Still, as marriage law in general was perceived to belong to the religious sphere by the Christian side as well, public courts would then employ Jewish law to decide financial claims of divorce and inheritance, which explains the considerable number of manuals that were aimed at Christian jurists, explaining to them the basics of rabbinic law concerning inheritance and marriage.

From an external theoretical perspective, all legal aspects of Jewish life other than matters of ritual, even disputes and financial claims between Jews, were understood to form part of the general legal system, even if they pertained to religious law. However, no early modern state administered law to all levels of society: rather, there were numerous independent legal domains, as well as individual and corporative legal privileges, and the state willingly relinquished less important legal matters and even some aspects of law and order to various corporate bodies and fraternities, which could deal with them according to their own internal agreements and customs. Most sovereigns, therefore, even requested that Jewish administrative bodies deal with minor cases between Jews, in order to relieve the inadequate machinery of public administration, just as the elders of a community had to handle the individual taxation of its members themselves, the community as a whole paying the total amount directly to the state. The Christian authorities asked only for a share of the court fees and fines that were imposed by the different Jewish forums. This specific concession conformed to the self-perception of Jewish communities as autonomous bodies with respect to legal matters, although from an external legal perspective this was only partially true. While it was clear that matters of criminal law and other major legal cases could only be tried by Christian courts, the question of what was to be understood as of "minor importance" often resulted in conflicts. This intensified over the early modern period, as most states showed a growing interest in the economic affairs of the Jewish population and therefore tried to handle at least the substantial financial claims directly. By the eighteenth century, Jewish privileges tended to define more precisely the line beyond which the state would tolerate Jewish legal autonomy.

From the external point of view, such corporative autonomy did not imply the explicit acknowledgment of the authority of the Jewish court system or its legal decisions. From the Christian perspective, only the territorial sovereign could hold such legal rights; the legal activities of mere corporations were reduced to the status of conciliatory proceedings, technically lower even than arbitration. In most states, both parties, plaintiff and defendant, could therefore apply at any time from a Jewish forum to Christian courts, even after a 'verdict' had been delivered, as

arbitration meant a voluntary reconciliation that satisfied both sides. This unreliable situation undercut the attempts from the Jewish side to establish and secure a relative autonomy, as any party that could afford the expense could try to gain a more favorable ruling in Christian courts, usually on the basis of different laws. But it also undermined the government's aspiration that the Jewish administration should relieve public courts. This explains why the Christian side was willing to ignore the legal differences between conciliatory proceedings and arbitration. By expressly awarding the Jewish side rights of coercion to support its decisions by fines and banning, their internal forums were effectively turned into courts of arbitration. Christian courts correspondingly would consider the 'decisions' made by a Jewish court if such a case was brought to them, which happened frequently.[16]

Absolutist states in particular tended to establish more consistent structures of governance. Some even went as far as defining Jewish courts as a kind of small-claims court, from which no appeal to Christian forums could be filed, as long as the fines or financial claims remained under a certain, rather low, limit, or unless the plaintiff could prove that essential aspects of legal procedure, such as the impartiality of the judge, had not been respected. This toleration of Jewish self-government sometimes indirectly allowed the Jewish community elders to expel someone from the community, although the right to admit and evict Jews was certainly restricted to the sovereign. Sometimes a Jewish community board would deal with other questions and disputes even though the relevant privileges made different provisions. In general, as long as public peace remained undisturbed and things worked out as they were supposed to do, the public administration's interest in Jewish internal affairs was rather restricted and their interest in the logics of Jewish legal thought modest. This pragmatic approach could change quite suddenly and lead to heated conflicts if the government felt that its rights and authority were being questioned. Such incidents sometimes resulted from the fact that Jewish communities frequently gained stability and some leeway by negotiating between competing local Christian authorities, and sometimes the Emperor, playing them

[16] Andreas Gotzmann, "Strukturen jüdischer Gerichtsautonomie," *Historische Zeitschrift* 267, 2 (1998), 313–56; Gotzmann, *Jüdisches Recht im kulturellen Prozeß: Die Wahrnehmung der Halacha im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Schriftenreihe wiss. Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 55 (Tübingen, 1997), 23–106; Monika Preuß, "*Sie könten klagen, wo sie wollten*": *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen rabbinischen Richtens in der frühen Neuzeit*, Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden 43 (Göttingen, 2014); Stefan Litt, *Jüdische Gemeindestatuten aus dem aschkenasischen Kulturraum (1650–1850)*, Archiv jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur 1 (Göttingen, 2014); Edward Fram, *A Window on their World: The Court Diaries of Rabbi Hayyim Gundersheim Frankfurt am Main 1773–1794* (Cincinnati, 2012).

off against each other, sometimes exploiting the particularities of their precarious, but in some respects indispensable and, at times, even favorable position.

Early modern society acknowledged vast differences between normative law and legal practice, which enabled a multitude of possibilities for how intra-Jewish disputes could be resolved. These differed from territory to territory and often allowed for several options even within one location and community. Which option was taken usually depended on which legal body or legal system promised better outcomes. It depended also on the financial means of both parties, as the general court system, with its indirect written proceedings, worked slowly and was quite expensive. Many cases never reached judgment, and some suits were filed simply to force the other party to waive its title or to accept a compromise. To prevent this, small-claims courts and courts of arbitration were set up to dispense justice inexpensively, rather like the intra-Jewish forums with their direct oral proceedings. Another important factor for a Jewish plaintiff when deciding whether to turn to a Christian or a Jewish court was his social and economic status. Jewish communities, especially the urban ones with their many social institutions and obligations toward the Christian authorities, tended to shield their internal affairs, and especially their conflicts, from the external view. Interference from outside could easily challenge the position of the communal board and the rabbinate, and sometimes trigger dangerous developments that might even endanger the life of individuals or the existence of the community as a whole. In this context, only something very important would prompt a poor Jew to antagonize the Jewish elders, who would usually fiercely defend their authority. In contrast, a well-off member of a prominent family might take this chance even in a minor matter. Jewish autonomy gained its stability from customary practice as established between the local administration and the community board. It could also rely on the fact that day-to-day practices, more often than not, followed local customs and stipulations over the specificities of written law. To secure some legal stability, community elders made use of social pressure, with the help of a sophisticated and widely used system of fines that also assisted with financing the considerable expenses of the community. Such actions were usually approved by the government as long as there were no considerable complaints from important community members, and in some cases the community board even employed subversive actions to suppress such complaints and conflicts to avoid any interference. Although there are vast differences according to location and time, with the exception of the rabbinate most sectors of the Jewish population did not hesitate to bring internal cases before Christian courts, but used Jewish forums if this seemed likely to be advantageous.

The strong interrelation of the Jewish and the external legal spheres was supported by the fact that Jews could expect a fair trial in Christian courts. In general, unjust treatment for being Jewish remained restricted to explicitly anti-Jewish accusations like blood libels or ritual murder. A few scholars maintain that Jews found guilty in Christian courts had to face harsher sentences in cases of corporal punishment or execution, but in the vast majority of cases this did not play any role. The Christian court system was attractive to Jews as, in contrast to Jewish arbitrations and verdicts, public courts provided the necessary reliability for legal acts as their decisions were usually accepted even by other courts and would be enforced by the authorities. Many cases show that the Christian legal system even accepted Judaism as a legitimate religion and would allow imprisoned Jews to perform religious rituals or keep the dietary laws if they could afford to pay for doing so. Attempts to convert a Jewish convict were frequent only when he faced a death sentence. The Jewish legal forums on the other hand, held some advantages too, and even Christian administrations often did not hesitate to use them as well. Not only were things kept within the ethnic group, but Jewish courts in general worked swiftly and inexpensively, as in general their costs had to be much lower than the fees in Christian forums in order to compete in this relatively open legal sphere. In commercial cases, especially those with wider transterritorial implications, Jewish law served as a platform that was familiar to Jews from any country. This is illustrated by the Jewish courts that were set up and tolerated at the fairs in Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig, following the Christian example of similar commercial courts.

The transterritorial advantages of Jewish legal organization are highlighted by the singular attempts of the emperor to establish an imperial rabbinate. While the first rabbi of Worms who was privileged for such an office was meant to secure the taxation of the Jewish population, his successor was somehow also intended to serve as a general Jewish court of appeal. As far as we know, this office did not match these expectations, failing to gain recognition from the Jewish community. After the death of the second postholder, R. Jacob ben Hayim (Loew), in 1574, the office fell into oblivion. When Jewish communities and regional representations agreed in 1603 at a meeting in Frankfurt am Main on several rabbinic courts to secure the decisions of Jewish courts across the Empire, these attempts were eventually crushed because they were seen as an attempt to establish an independent jurisdiction. The agreement to give these courts the right to ban any culprit who would not heed the verdict of a Jewish court or apply to Christian forums was understood as an infringement on imperial rights. It remains questionable whether the agreement would have withstood the multitude of territorial entitlements, or whether it served in the best interest of the Jewish population, but the actual motive for the

subsequent proceedings against the Jewish population of the Empire originated from the intention to extort money. After this ground-shaking incident, no comparable attempts from the Jewish side can be found.[17]

Rabbinic as well as Christian courts nevertheless continued to take expert advice from central rabbinates and communities. This fostered extended Jewish contexts and hierarchies throughout the Empire as these Jewish interrelations were also acknowledged by the Christian side. While leading communities such as Hamburg, Frankfurt am Main, Fürth, and certainly Prague had very high legal status within the Jewish world, and as its rabbinates served as a kind of appeal court – from a non-Jewish perspective, as legal consultants – the specific competences, as well as the cooperation between local rabbinates and community boards, were prompted on a territorial level by absolutist politics. The acknowledgment of Jewish courts by the government – be it the community leadership's or rabbinic courts, arbitrations or proper court proceedings according to Jewish law – always existed not in spite of, but rather by virtue of, this unclear situation. The disparity in being denied legal validity and yet being used, and sometimes even requested, to take over certain administrative and judiciary functions, as well as the common discrepancy between normative law and legal practice, allowed Jewish communities to negotiate and exercise a certain autonomy. The extent to which the internal system was used by Jews – as compared to their usage of Christian courts – is almost impossible to determine as even matters that were understood as "religious" included numerous aspects that pertained to property law and therefore were treated by public courts as well. This is certainly one of the reasons why so many Jewish cases of family law, inheritance, or divorce were tried by Christian judges.[18]

LAW, POLITICS, AND JEWISH COMMUNAL HIERARCHIES

The general ambiguity that characterized the legal framework and corporative autonomy was also decisive for the power of the Jewish elites. As part of

[17] Gotzmann, *Autonomie*, 101–205; Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, "Bürgeraufstand in Worms 1614. Judenprivilegien und Bürgerrechte in der Frühen Neuzeit: Ein Widerspruch?," in Norbert Fischer and Marion Kobelt-Groch, eds., *Außenseiter zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*. Festschrift für Hans-Jürgen Goertz zum 60. Geburtstag (Leiden, 1997), 101–10; Volker Press, "Kaiser Rudolf II. und der Zusammenschluss der deutschen Judenheit. Die sogenannte Frankfurter Rabbiner Verschwörung von 1603 und ihre Folgen," in Alfred Haverkamp, ed., *Zur Geschichte der Juden im Deutschland des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 1981), 243–92; Moritz Stern, *Die Wormser Reichsrabbiner Samuel und Jakob (1521–1574)* (Berlin, 1937).

[18] Gotzmann, *Autonomie*, 25–144; Felix Priebatsch, "Die Judenpolitik des fürstlichen Absolutismus im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert," in *Forschungen und Versuche zur Geschichte des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit: Festschrift Dietrich Schäfer* (Jena, 1915), 564–651.

the same process that had in fact discreetly changed the legal character of Jewish forums from conciliatory proceedings to arbitrations, and sometimes even to small-claims courts, the position of Jewish officials was strengthened, as it made little sense, from the point of view of Jewish or Christian administrations, to allow any party to apply unhindered to Christian forums. The necessity of supporting Jewish administrative bodies led to a wide acknowledgment of the rabbinic ban – a collective term for all Jewish means of coercion – by Christian government bodies. Privileges became increasingly explicit about the cases in which community elders and rabbis could and should use fines and banning. At times the ban was even imposed by order of Christian authorities. This usually meant withholding religious honors and imposing other such kinds of public humiliation in order to force members to acknowledge relevant claims or to comply with decisions. This gradual exclusion from religious and public life could culminate in an expulsion from the community. Even though such an action was the right of the sovereign alone, rulers and administrations again tolerated, and even supported, these corporative sanctions as long as they did not interfere with their interests and legal titles. While such measures had been agreed upon by both sides, many conflicts and even privileges document a general mistrust of Jewish elders and rabbis who were suspected of misusing the ban to strengthen their authority. This fear is still mirrored in the debates of the Enlightenment that took the rabbinic ban as a paradigm for a general critique of religion, especially with respect to the question of religious freedom. Thus, the mistrust, especially of the rabbinate, was transferred to modern times, taking these specifics of Jewish corporative society as evidence that Jews could and would not integrate into the larger society. As a consequence, the first step in the emancipation of Jews in European countries was to deny any governmental acknowledgment to Jewish courts.[19]

The early modern state in its characteristic negative attitude toward Judaism mistrusted its Jewish counterparts, yet it relied on them in matters of general taxation and public policy. Although the authorities strengthened Jewish communal independence to achieve these aims, they wanted input, and some insight, into internal matters. Two agencies were decisive: the rabbinate and the community leadership. Although the rabbinate was seen as the natural representative of a religious tradition, the latter was much more important from an external point of view, but in most respects also from an internal one. Many states would regulate the appointment of

[19] Gotzmann, *Autonomie*, 275–338; Gotzmann, *Eigenheit und Einheit: Modernisierungsdiskurse des deutschen Judentums in der Emanzipationszeit*, Studies in European Judaism 2 (Leiden, 2002), 38–44.

rabbis and their range of action. Government approval was required after a rabbi had been elected by a community, but candidates were imposed from outside only in rare cases. Most early modern states explicitly assigned certain matters to the rabbi, such as the supervision of religious ritual and the imposition of bans on criminals and troublemakers, and often dealing with small claims amongst Jews as well. As a result, rabbis regularly gained a somewhat public status and enjoyed considerable esteem within the Christian administration, as they also acted in the state's best interest. The rabbi's function in heading the tax assessment commissions illustrates this aspect quite well.

The members of the community board, however, were the representatives of the Jewish population. Many states approved the usual internal elections as a prerequisite for their acknowledgment by the government, while others would appoint a single representative, at times only the highest community leader. The general ideal of stable hierarchies in matters of public policy was not totally opposed to Jewish ideas of communal administration. In the early modern period, a general Jewish legal model of community as partnership of equal individuals gained considerable significance, to the point of characterizing most of the community by-laws. It defined a time-restricted authority that was vested by community members in the representatives who had been nominated collectively, using a combined system of elections and lottery. Although this concept was advocated by rabbinic lore, most of the western Ashkenazic communities in practice nevertheless held on to older ideas of community and representation. This well-established model supported elitist lifelong appointments, excluding the majority of community members in favor of a steep social hierarchy headed by a few oligarchs. This model could appeal to time-honored perceptions, which privileged family networks according to their local venerability and their respectability, which combined good reputation with renowned ancestry, usually wealth, and sometimes even religious scholarship. As most communities were governed for generations by members of a few families, the interventions from the outside to ensure reliable long-term leadership, preferably under a single individual, were not that much of an infringement on the Jewish sphere. Some governments only checked the respectability of these representatives, whereas others requested a formal public acknowledgment. Many rulers bestowed the leadership office on individuals with whom they were acquainted, usually businessmen who had direct relations with the royal court as privileged agents and Court Jews. Again, some states would not only issue special privileges to these representatives, but required a specific oath toward the sovereign and the Jewish community that almost transformed this office into a public one.

Gaining such an office was often a question of personal wealth from an internal as well as an external perspective, partly because business success relied on familiarity with the Christian administration and its organizational procedures – skills a community leader needed – and often community elders had to advance money to their communities. But prosperity was not the only criterion. Many middle-class members held communal offices, as the Jewish concept of respectability and long-term local establishment met the expectations on the Christian side. And if a community leader had successfully established himself in this office and forged close ties to the different levels of public administration, the authorities usually supported this person strongly, even against vehement protests from the community or from competing elites. On many occasions, Jewish elders were even backed up against complaints that were obviously justified, even though the common anti-Jewish expectation from the Christian side was that Jewish authorities in general tended to misuse their power. The government thus ensured reliable cooperation between the state and the Jewish population, in this way safeguarding public order and peace and its vital interests in the financial power and stability of the Jewish community.

Other spokesmen who addressed issues in the name of the Jewish population would correspondingly be mistrusted and, at most, be heard only if they produced convincing evidence of broad and relevant support. Even Jewish intermediaries who were appointed by one or more communities for specific missions always had to substantiate their commission to act. Other than the famous *shtadlan* ("intercessor") Josel b. Gershon Loanz of Rosheim, who served several times as an intermediary at the end of medieval times and who had been acknowledged from the Christian side as an advocate for the Jews within the Holy Roman Empire, the early modern era saw many such missions, some of them transcommunal and transterritorial; but none of these individuals gained comparable prominence and general recognition. These intermediaries were picked with regard to their personal experience and contacts with the relevant Christian counterparts, and in direct relation to the administrative body that had to be addressed and the aim to be achieved. Their office was clearly delimited, in sharp contrast to the activities of community leaders who sometimes went to some length, taking on enormous expenses and risks in their attempts to defend communal privileges or to secure the welfare of the community.

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE AND THE POLISH–LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH: A COMPARISON

If we compare this situation to Jewish life in eastern Europe, especially within the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, these basic legal

developments seem quite comparable to the initial status of eastern European Jews as serfs to the royal chamber, and the shift of the right to tolerate Jews to the nobility and gentry. In contrast, however, the Jewish corporate bodies of representation in eastern Europe almost elevated these to the status of a distinct estate, although neither the Jewish Council of the Four Lands nor any of its subordinate administrations gained any legal recognition. Nevertheless, these administrative bodies not only were accepted by the Christian administration as legitimate counterparts, but also were able to establish internal organizations and administrative hierarchies, even if their effectiveness was at times questionable. As privileges in eastern Europe allowed a broad autonomy in matters of Jewish self-administration as well as in legal matters, the internal courts enjoyed a much larger, and in general unquestioned, authority in their dealings. As the Council of the Four Lands introduced rabbinic courts of appeal that would function beyond the local and territorial courts on the level of the Commonwealth, the general structures of autonomous Jewish life were much stronger and more secure compared to the unstable situation within the Holy Roman Empire, where the scope for Jewish action – and even survival – was largely dependent on making use of legislative and political flexibilities and ambiguities. Recent research has put this general picture of a rather independent and self-sufficient Polish-Jewish society into perspective, pointing out that the functionality of the Jewish administration often remained unsatisfactory. As in the Holy Roman Empire, powerful territorial lords tended to weaken the influence of the king and the Sejm, as well as of the Jewish Central Council, in Poland. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the authority of the rabbinate had weakened considerably and new assessments of the Jewish acknowledgment and use of rabbinical and communal courts versus Christian forums show that the differences compared to the situation in western Europe might not have been that pronounced after all, as many Jewish disputes were brought to public courts.[20]

However, there are two factors that influenced the life of Polish Jewry and its social and legal status enormously which have no counterpart within the Holy Roman Empire. The first aspect is the enormous size of the Jewish population in Poland, especially in the rural areas and small

[20] Adam Teller, "Der Blick nach Osten. Rechtlicher Status und Rechtssystem der polnischen Judenheit vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert," in Gotzmann and Wendehorst, eds., *Juden im Recht*, 395–414; Teller, "The Laicization of Early Modern Jewish Society: The Development of the Polish Communal Rabbinate in the 16th Century," in Michael Graetz, ed., *Schöpferische Momente des europäischen Judentums in der frühen Neuzeit* (Heidelberg, 2000), 333–50.

towns of the south and east, which grew rapidly during the early modern period, becoming the largest Jewish community worldwide with about 750,000 individuals in the second half of the eighteenth century.[21] Especially in these regions with a large Jewish population, the settlement restriction that forced the Jews to live in small towns led to the development of the paradigmatic *Yiddishn shtetl* with large Jewish segments. While this certainly supported self-government, virtually constituting a Jewish administration that paralleled the Christian society and in some places even became significant for society as a whole, most Jews within the Empire lived dispersed in small settlements, sometimes consisting of not more than a few families. These rural Jewish societies could rarely maintain a communal life, let alone independent administrative structures, and the attempts to do so by larger confederations suffered from ineffectiveness.[22] Only some urban centers within the Empire – due to their privileges and the economic opportunities, as well as the larger numbers of Jewish individuals within one community – managed to establish comparable institutions that would strengthen social cohesion and could to some extent secure autonomous structures and combined political action.

The second aspect that defined Jewish life in Poland is closely related to the numerical situation. Compared to their Polish brethren, the Jews within the Empire remained much more restricted in their economic activities. These restrictions were strong in both societies, even though some crafts had been opened to Jews in Poland.[23] Although some individuals within the Empire succeeded in gaining exceptional positions as court financers or monopoly contractors – in some cases, even positions of considerable influence – none of the Jewish industries proved to be indispensable for the economics of society at large. Jews in the West usually had to make their living in marginal economic domains that were not regulated by guilds or that proved too risky, or even hazardous, and often

[21] Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World*, 53–7; Gerson David Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004), 21–31; Evyatar Friesel, *Atlas of Modern Jewish History* (New York, 1990), 30–1.

[22] Arye Maimon, "Tagungen von Judenschaften in Westdeutschland im frühen 16. Jahrhundert," *Jahrbuch für westdeutsche Landesgeschichte* 5 (1979), 71–82; Daniel Cohen, "Irgune Bne ha-Medina be-Aschkenas be-Maot 17.–18.," 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1967).

[23] Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*; Hundert, *The Jews in a Polish Private Town: The Case of Opatów in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1992); Moshe J. Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate–Jewish Relations in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe (1772–1881)*, trans. Chaya Naor, Jewish Culture and Contexts (Philadelphia, 2002), 1–46; Adam Teller, "The Legal Status of the Jews on the Magnate Estates of Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century," *Gal-Ed* 15–16 (1997), 41–63.

unprofitable, for Christians. The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth also restricted Jewish professions. Although the Jewish population was again forced into specific niches of the local economy, the lack of a relevant Christian commercial 'middle' stratum, especially in the southern and eastern areas, made Jewish traders, and even craftsmen, crucial for the overall economic structure of the estates. In many towns that were opened to Jews, Jewish merchants were predominant in the local commercial class. And even in the realm of the production of spirits, which was leased exclusively to Jews in many territories, Jewish monopolists became decisive for the economy of the estate as this was the most profitable way to commercialize the agricultural production of grain. Jewish leaseholders administered estates for the gentry, securing them a fixed income from their possessions and meanwhile unburdening the owners of the relevant administrative functions. Jewish traders – entrepreneurs as well as Jewish communities – were able to negotiate considerable privileges by threatening to leave a town, something only a well-established community within the Empire, such as that in Frankfurt am Main, could perhaps hint at, as the threat of expulsion there was always manifest. Within the Empire, economic competition as well as political instability was far too strong to allow for such hazardous action.

The decisive difference between the social position of Jews in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and of those in the Holy Roman Empire could be summarized as follows: Polish Jewry gained an economic relevance for the gentry and the overall economy of the country as it held a strong, and in many areas indispensable, position in the economic landscape, forming a large part of the intermediary class and the merchant community, while monopolizing some occupations that were important to the financial situation of the country. The Jewish communities within the Empire, in contrast, were primarily of financial interest in connection to their taxation. Jewish commerce was never indispensable, certainly not beyond the local level, which kept the Jewish population in a rather unstable situation, dependent on the whims and needs of the royalty and gentry.[24]

In contrast to the perspective that the Jewish population was nothing but a religious minority that was at the mercy of Christian princes, the Jewish population within the Holy Roman Empire enjoyed significant legal standing compared to other social groups, certainly in contrast to the vast peasant population. And, in contrast with many other social groups, they often acted with alertness and political acumen, using the available possibilities to secure

[24] Adam Teller, "Telling the Difference: Some Comparative Perspectives on the Jew's Legal Status in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Holy Roman Empire," *Polin* 22 (2010), 109–41.

their best interest. For Jewish rural societies, this might have meant keeping close contact with the village's bailiff, while in the complex power structure of an imperial city a multitude of influences and factors had to be accounted for. On both levels, such action called for an intimate understanding of the logics and structures of the multi-layered early modern legal system and its political players, just to be able to make a living.

This was even more important when it came to matters of commercial privileges, finance, or general security. Often maximizing collective interests required instant action, and sometimes a change of allegiance, as negotiations between possible options and sides, rather than passivity, helped to safeguard Jewish existence. As the Christian administration requested clear documentation in legal affairs, Jewish community boards often kept detailed records even of external privileges, decrees, and court rulings, which also points to a perhaps locally restricted but nevertheless long-term perspective in Jewish political action, a fact that was well known to the Christian side. Jews had to face severe financial exploitation and enormous restrictions with regard to their economic and social life, as well as their rights of settlement. Sometimes they even had to avert or face expulsions and persecutions, while being much more jeopardized by antagonism and violence than other social groups in everyday life. Taking this into account, Jewish communities succeeded amazingly well in maintaining a rather stable status under such unfavorable conditions under numerous sovereigns, sometimes several at a time, and often dealing with changing political agendas.

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CHAPTER 5

JEWS AND THE EARLY MODERN ECONOMY

FRANCESCA TRIVELLATO

Neither in the Middle Ages nor during the early modern period was every Jew a merchant. Across early modern Europe and the Mediterranean, the majority of the Jewish population was occupied in small-scale urban trades and crafts; tiny segments continued to derive their sustenance from agriculture; and many more scraped by, living barely above the subsistence level. Nonetheless, there are good reasons to focus on long-distance commerce in a chapter entitled "Jews and the Early Modern Economy." In many important ways, commerce affected the daily and institutional life of entire Jewish communities. It inspired more inclusive policies of toleration and intensified interactions between Jews and non-Jews. Overseas trade is also often better documented in historical records and the secondary literature than other economic sectors.

This chapter focuses on the period between 1500 and 1700 and devotes special attention to the western Sephardim – that is, those Jews who, after leaving Iberia, settled in western Europe rather than the Ottoman Empire. Until 1630, it was not always easy to distinguish between the Sephardim of Europe and those of the Ottoman Empire. Some families had relatives scattered along both the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. The language of government documents granting Sephardim the right to settle in Italian port cities sometimes made a distinction between "Levantine Jews" (those arriving from the Ottoman Empire unambiguously as Jews) and "Ponentine Jews" (those fleeing Iberia as practicing Catholics). The distinction was more intended to assuage the anxieties of the Roman Catholic Church regarding New Christians (baptized Jews and their descendants) and to keep the Inquisition at bay than it can be taken to be an accurate description of the inner lives, or even the collective identities, of those to whom these designations were applied.

In demographic terms, the western Sephardim counted at most some 20,000 individuals at any given time. However, they experienced some of the most transformative changes affecting Jewish people, institutions, and culture during the early modern period, and commerce was largely

responsible for those changes. The expulsion and forced conversion of Iberian Jews in the 1490s coincided with a time of unprecedented European overseas expansion. The rise of Sephardic trading networks in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, with links across the Indian and Pacific oceans, was an entirely new phenomenon that would have been hard to predict at the closing of the fifteenth century. In examining the rise and decline of the Sephardic trading diaspora, what follows also points to parallel, divergent, and intertwined trajectories in the economic life and institutions of other Jewish groups.

Three interrelated themes are paramount in this analysis: (1) the relationship between changes that were under way in the commercial and legal arena of early modern European societies at large and the transformation of Jewish economic activities; (2) the degree of autonomy, insularity, and self-sustenance of Jewish trading networks, and their integration into larger communities of merchants; and (3) the question of whether and to what extent the pursuit of profit that drove all merchants, regardless of their religious backgrounds, gave rise to more benign attitudes toward Jews.

FROM MONEYLENDING TO COMMERCE

At the close of the Middle Ages, the rise of a Sephardic trading diaspora that would span all corners of the globe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was anything but a foregone conclusion. The legal status, social integration, and economic dynamism of Jews across Europe and the Mediterranean had deteriorated after the twelfth century. In central Europe, violent attacks against Jews accompanied the launching of the First Crusade in 1095; new and widespread massacres followed the accusation that Jews spread leprosy in the 1320s and the bubonic plague in 1348–9; and in the fifteenth century, most German cities expelled their Jewish population. The same fate had already befallen the Jews of England and France, who were banished from there in 1290 and 1394, respectively.

The Iberian and Italian peninsulas contained the largest Jewish populations of Christian Europe during the Middle Ages: some 200,000 and 50,000, respectively. There, too, conditions worsened. In Spain, a spiral of massacres and forced conversions starting in the fourteenth century preceded the creation in 1479 of a modern Inquisition, which aimed to eradicate Judaism and Islam from the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. Throughout these travails, many Italian cities and regional states gave shelter to Jewish refugees from other parts of Europe. However, they also imposed ever more restrictive sanctions. In addition to issuing policies

affecting Jews' daily lives, such as the obligation to wear a distinctive sign, the Roman Catholic Church and secular governments across the peninsula also assaulted Jewish economic activities. During the fifteenth century, Franciscan friars sought to displace Jewish pawnbrokers and foment hostility against them by setting up rival credit institutions for the poor (Monti di pietà).

In this period, moneylending and petty trade in second-hand goods were the two principal economic roles performed by Jews in the Italian peninsula and in those German territories where Jews still resided. Gone was the wide range of commercial, artisanal, and agricultural activities in which they had engaged during the early Middle Ages (although recent scholarship has reassessed the degree to which Jewish merchants dominated European and Mediterranean trade before the twelfth century).[1] More and more frequently, Jews were permitted to settle and worship in Christian territories on condition that they extended financial services to the state (sometimes an individual ruler) and to the poor.

The situation changed during the sixteenth century in response to the growing competition for the control of European overseas commerce. Some states north and south of the Alps began to devise fresh policies of toleration and invited Jews to take on new roles in inter-regional and inter-continental trade. In 1550, the French king allowed "Portuguese called New Christians" to reside in the southwest of France and exempted them from the punitive *droit d'aubain*, which accorded to the crown the assets of all foreigners who died in the kingdom. As a result, small enclaves of New Christian merchants flourished in Bordeaux and its surroundings. They carried out licit and illicit trade across the Franco-Spanish border, particularly during the Spanish embargo against English goods (1585–1604) and after Spain reinstated the embargo against Dutch ships in 1621; later, especially during the eighteenth century, they participated in the growth of French shipping and commerce in the Atlantic. The new charters issued in Venice (1589) and Livorno (1591–3) to woo families of Sephardic merchants were even more explicit than the French decree. Not only did they encourage New Christians to settle openly as Jews by offering them considerable protection from the Inquisition, but they also explicitly prohibited Sephardim from dealing in second-hand goods

[1] Michael Toch, "The Jews in Europe, 500–1050," in P. Fouracre, ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. I (Cambridge, 2005), 547–70, 872–8; Toch, "Jews and Commerce: Modern Fancies and Medieval Realities," in Simona Cavaciocchi, ed., *Il ruolo economico delle minoranze in Europa, secc. XIII–XVIII (Atti della XXXI Settimana di Studi, Istituto Francesco Datini, Prato)* (Florence, 2000), 43–58.

and created the institutional incentives for them to engage in long-distance trade. In so doing, the Venetian Republic and the Medici grand dukes also set the new arrivals from Iberia apart from the Italian and Ashkenazic Jews who already resided in their territories, whose economic activities remained confined to retail trade and local banking. These charters, together with the increasing relocation of Iberian New Christians and Jews to Atlantic Europe, created the basis for the transition from moneylending to international commerce and finance.

Through the early modern period, Jews across Europe remained barred from becoming members of craft guilds. This prohibition did not cut them out altogether from artisanal activities. In many cities, they developed manufacturing operations alongside those controlled by corporate organizations, whether illicitly (as did many tailors in Rome) or legally (as did diamond cutters and polishers in Amsterdam). In Poland, in particular, the growing Jewish population underwent a process of occupational diversification, especially during the eighteenth century, in part to serve a large Jewish internal market. But it was in the realm of long-distance trade and finance that the economic activities of European Jewry changed the most during the early modern period. Profound legal transformations within both gentile and Jewish societies facilitated the inclusion of Jewish merchants in the commercial society of western Europe. These transformations were slow in the making and often incomplete, but, taken together, they amounted to a considerable reconfiguration of Jewish–Christian economic relations. Three, in particular, should be highlighted.

First, during the late Middle Ages, beginning in Italy, commercial papers signed by individuals who were known as "merchants" (normally because they belonged to a merchant guild) acquired legal validity (*publica fide*) even if they did not carry the seal of a notary or another public authority. This legal innovation increased merchants' ability to expedite their business. With the decline of merchant (though not craft) guilds during the sixteenth century, the definition of who was a merchant in most European cities ceased to be tied to membership in a corporate body. As a result, Jewish merchants, too, could sign private contracts – for example, in the form of business letters – that had full legal standing before a secular court. Not only did business letters facilitate the circulation of information within Jewish networks, but the legal validity of commercial papers also assisted the development of Jewish–Christian credit relations. In many European cities, Sephardic merchants were entitled to enter into contract with any other merchants and to use all available types of contract, as well as to uphold their private agreements before local and appeals courts. This is not to say that, during the Middle Ages, Jews and Christians lacked the

means to enter into contract with each other. After all, the principle according to which Jews accepted the law of the land as law (*dina d'malkhuta dina*) was not new. But state institutions, more than the informal infrastructure of commercial credit, had overseen Jewish–Christian relations in medieval Europe. In Roman-law countries, the public notary remained an essential institution for the purpose of conferring legal validity upon private documents. In fourteenth-century southern France, Jews and Christians litigated on the basis of notary deeds drawn up by Christian notaries.[2] Common law, by contrast, required the creation of special offices. In twelfth-century England, the Exchequer of the Jews preserved and ratified all economic deeds transacted by Jews (debts, pledges, mortgages, IOUs, rents, purchases, sales, quittances, and the like), and particularly those contracts in which Jewish lenders declared that their Christian creditors had fulfilled all their payments. Unless the Exchequer ratified them, contracts written by Jews had no legal standing.[3] By the seventeenth century, this oversight was no longer necessary. A Jewish merchant in Amsterdam, London, or Livorno (or a New Christian merchant in Bordeaux) could simply submit before a tribunal a letter addressed to him by a Christian or a Jewish agent as evidence of existing contractual obligations between them. Bills of exchange no longer needed to be notarized, and through this instrument of commercial credit, it became easier for Jews and Christians to borrow money from one another without collateral. Jews were now also allowed to fund the public debt – unlike in the late medieval Italian cities where the public debt had first been introduced – and thus gained an additional form of economic and symbolic belonging to the urban community at large.

A second and related change concerns the transition from the collective to the individual legal responsibility of Jews. In the Middle Ages, Christian authorities routinely assigned collective blame to an entire Jewish community for the wrongdoings of one of its members, whether the crime was real or imaginary (as in the case of blood libels). The fear that an individual's malfeasance, including economic misconduct, could bring legal reprisal or simply bad reputation to the community at large haunted Jewish leaders well into the early modern period. Collective punishments continued to occur at least occasionally during this period. In 1515–19, the Holy See imposed the payment of a tax on all its Jewish subjects, in both Rome and Ferrara, in retaliation for the financial mismanagement by one among

[2] Joseph Schatzmiller, *Shylock Reconsidered: Jews, Moneylending and Medieval Society* (Berkeley, 1990).

[3] Israel Abrahams and H. P. Stokes, eds., *Starrs and Jewish Charters Preserved in the British Museum*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1930).

them.[4] As Venetian–Ottoman hostilities escalated, fears of a Jewish plot against the Republic led to the expulsion of all Jews living in Venetian overseas territories in 1568, and in the wake of the battle of Lepanto, in 1571, the Senate briefly considered a general expulsion of all Jews from Venice.[5] As a rule, however, in those western European cities where Sephardim were admitted to conduct business after around 1550, a regime of individual rather than collective legal responsibility prevailed.[6] This is not to say that Jewish merchants ceased to worry about their collective reputation in the eyes of Christian authorities and competitors. In 1688, community leaders forbade congregants from dealing in stocks in the vicinity of the Portuguese synagogue in order to fend off accusations that Jewish brokers had caused the financial crash of the Amsterdam stock market. But in seventeenth-century Holland, even the worst "antisemitic phantasies" did not lead to any collective sanction.[7] The situation was somewhat different in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, where the elders of the community (*kahal*) were often held responsible for the debt of other congregation members. Consequently, they were keen to oversee commercial transactions with non-Jews and devised harsh punishments for those members who went bankrupt.[8] Overall, they may have exerted a tighter economic discipline than the leaders of Sephardic communities.

A third important transformation swept across the Jewish world in both western and eastern Europe: most rabbis relaxed halakhic norms in economic matters, including in matters of lending at interest. By choice and by necessity, rabbinical leaders of the newly created Sephardic communities of western Europe displayed particular leniency, in part because the new politics of toleration invited Jewish merchants to participate in the gentile commercial world, and in part because adherence to Jewish law was often incomplete among descendants of Iberian converts. In northern Europe and Italy, moreover, not rabbis, but lay leaders, who were themselves merchants and bankers, were in charge of the community's administration, which included the task of regulating disputes over economic obligations. Rabbinic opinion in this

[4] Léon Poliakov, *Les banquiers juifs et le Saint-Siège du XIIIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1965), 171.

[5] Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden, 1995), 62–3, 74–6.

[6] The same rule did not apply to German-speaking lands, where Emperor Leopold expelled Jews from Vienna in 1669 and Maria Theresa expelled them from Prague in 1745.

[7] Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden, 2002), 450–5.

[8] Gershon David Hundert, "The Role of the Jews in Commerce in Early Modern Poland–Lithuania," *Journal of European Economic History* 16, 2 (1987), 245–75, esp. 263–6.

sphere ranged widely. As late as 1559, Rabbi Yehiel Nissim da Pisa, a scholar and a banker himself, compiled a compendium of anti-usury Jewish laws and condemned all forms of lending at interest, including bills of exchange (which, he claimed, were rarely used by Jews anyway).[9] In contrast, the Venetian Rabbi Simone Luzzatto (1582–1663) issued the most candid approval of Jews' handling of bills of exchange to date by a rabbinical authority.[10] Accommodation became a trend among the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire and the Ashkenazim of Poland as well.[11] In spite of multiple injunctions by Polish rabbis against the trading and drinking of non-kosher wine or of wine touched by non-Jews (*stam yeynam*), both practices expanded after the sixteenth century in parallel to the growing role of Jews in the administration of rural estates and wine retail – so much that, in some instances, rabbis explicitly condoned these practices. Meanwhile, in Poland, the use of promissory notes payable to bearers (known as *mamran*, from the Latin word for parchment, *membrana*) spread even in dealings between Christians and Jews. Although these credit instruments infringed upon talmudic prohibitions, they became so common that halakhic disputes concerned some of their features but did not question their overall legitimacy.[12]

Finally, intensified commercial relations with gentiles also led Jews to infringe more and more the prohibition on bringing their lawsuits before non-Jewish tribunals. Wherever there is trade, there is litigation; and records show that Jews appeared before non-Jewish courts on a regular basis, and often by choice even in cities like Livorno, where the Jewish community was granted unusually ample jurisdictional autonomy and where the law did not allow lawsuits between Jews to be brought before secular courts in the first instance, but only on appeal. In Holland, where Jews had a much lower degree of jurisdictional autonomy than in Livorno, municipal and appeals courts, including Holland's Supreme Court (the Hoge Raad van Holland en Zeeland), heard countless cases involving local and foreign Jews. Even away from the bustling centers of international trade, ordinary Jewish men and women turned to secular courts to sort out small quarrels and serious disputes in economic matters. By the late eighteenth century, even the relatively insular

[9] Gilbert S. Rosenthal, ed. and trans., *Banking and Finance among Jews in Renaissance Italy: A Critical Edition of "The Eternal Life" (Haye Olam) by Yehiel Nissim da Pisa* (New York, 1962), 127.

[10] Benjamin Arbel, "Jews, the Rise of Capitalism and *Cambio*: Commercial Credit and Maritime Insurance in the Early Modern Mediterranean World" [Hebrew], *Zion* 69, 2 (2004), 157–202, esp. 191.

[11] On the Ottoman Empire, see Matt Goldish, *Jewish Questions: Sephardic Life in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, 2008). On Poland, see Edward Fram, *Ideals Face Reality: Jewish Law and Life in Poland, 1550–1650* (Cincinnati, 1997).

[12] Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 131–5.

Jews of Metz found reasons to plead before secular rather than rabbinic courts.[13]

JEWS AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN STATES

Propelling the transformation of the Jews of Europe from moneylenders to merchants and financiers was a host of new policies promoted by several states, which altogether amounted to a new phenomenon that Jonathan Israel suitably labels "philosemitic mercantilism."[14] The fierce economic competition that pitted European states against each other in the arena of long-distance trade, and the need to contain the destructive forces of religious conflicts, provided the impetus behind these initiatives. Their impact was most visible in western Europe, where, after the expulsion from Castile and Aragon, the geography of the Jewish diaspora was altered radically in the 140 years between the creation of the ghetto in Venice in 1516 and the readmission of Jews to England in 1656. Considerable changes also occurred in the Holy Roman Empire and especially in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, where, after the mid sixteenth century, Jews took on new economic roles.

During the first century after 1492, Sephardic settlements across the Mediterranean and Atlantic Europe grew in number, size, and economic relevance, but still remained precarious. Initially, the Ottoman Empire offered the safest haven. The bulk of Spanish émigrés settled there, mostly in Constantinople and Salonika (modern-day Thessaloniki). Two principal axes began to develop within the Sephardic trading diaspora: one centered on the eastern Mediterranean and connecting Venice to the Levant, and one branching out to northern Europe and connecting Iberia first to Antwerp and then to Amsterdam and Hamburg, and from there to the Atlantic and beyond.

After a new Inquisition modeled on that of Spain was created in Portugal in 1536, New Christians (those Jews who had been compulsorily baptized en masse in 1497) saw their personal safety and properties in ever greater peril. In growing numbers, they left for northern Europe (notably Antwerp) and those Italian cities that granted them protection (Ferrara in

[13] Frances Malino, "Competition and Confrontation: The Jews and the *parlement* of Metz," in Gilbert Dahan, ed., *Les Juifs au regard de l'histoire: mélanges en l'honneur de Bernhard Blumenkranz* (Paris, 1985), 327–41; Jay R. Berkovitz, "Acculturation and Integration in Eighteenth-Century Metz," *Jewish History* 24 (2010), 271–94.

[14] Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1989), 56.

1538, Ancona in 1547, Florence in 1548, and Nice, too, then part of the Duchy of Savoy, for a brief interlude from 1572 to 1574). But their condition remained insecure until the Tuscan grand duchy and the Venetian Republic issued durable and comprehensive charters in favor of Sephardic families and provided them with an environment conducive to their commercial activities – the Tuscan grand duchy tentatively in 1551 and resolutely in 1591 and 1593, and the Venetian Republic in 1589. Further north, in 1549 Charles V ordered the expulsion of those New Christians who had recently arrived in Antwerp (previous settlers were permitted to remain in the city, but in 1550 the establishment of the Inquisition in the Low Countries threatened resident New Christians).[15] After the blockade of the city by the Dutch forces in 1585, the most entrepreneurial segment of the Portuguese population moved to Amsterdam, where it gave birth to what was to become the largest Sephardic hub in Europe. Amsterdam was also the only city in Europe that set no restrictions on foreigners engaged in any type of commercial and financial activity. The Senate of Hamburg, by contrast, drew up a formal charter in 1612 detailing the conditions under which Sephardic families could reside and conduct their trade.

Poland–Lithuania was the other magnet for Jewish immigration during the early modern period, welcoming refugees from central Europe and from the most impoverished Italian communities. Faced with the opposition of town guildsmen and wealthy merchants in cities like Danzig and Warsaw, Jews found their protectors initially in the crown and later in feudal lords, who looked to inject capital and better management into their rural estates. In 1539 and 1549, "the king transferred to the nobles jurisdiction over Jews living on the nobles' private estates."[16] Following this measure, Jews moved progressively eastward, particularly after the merging of the kingdom of Poland and the grand duchy of Lithuania in 1569. In the eastern regions, they leased and managed large parcels of lands on behalf of absentee landlords. Everywhere they assumed a prominent role in local and regional trade and manufacturing, particularly in liquor distilling, soap making, and fur processing. They also handled a share of the international trade in commodities other than grain, including the export of fur and wool and the import of textiles, wine, and colonial goods.[17] All in all, Polish Jews stood out for their trading and entrepreneurial activities within

[15] J. A. Goris, *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1568: contribution à l'étude des débuts du capitalisme moderne* (Louvain, 1925), 576–7.

[16] Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia, 1973), 120.

[17] Moseh Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate–Jewish Relations in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

a deeply rural society. Rather than serving the central state, they served the interests of the feudal class, which controlled the largest land holdings and their staple exports. In contrast, the state played a considerable role in boosting Jewish economic entrepreneurship in the Holy Roman Empire. Even in the largest communities, such as Prague and Frankfurt, after the readmission in the 1570s most Jews worked as tradesmen and craftsmen. Yet during the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), their influence grew substantially, thanks to the ability of a few well-to-do Jews to supply both the emperor and local princes with key financial services and military provisions.

The initial rise of the Sephardic trading diaspora was linked to the role of its members as intermediaries between the territories under Venetian and Ottoman domination in the eastern Mediterranean. Throughout the fifteenth century, in keeping with its strictly protectionist economic policies, Venice banned all foreigners and Jews from shipping goods from and to its port – a measure that was meant to reserve the lucrative trade with the Levant for the city's patricians and "citizens" (who were second only to the patricians in the social hierarchy). Jews residing in the Venetian colonies of the eastern Mediterranean – such as Corfu, Crete, Cyprus, Koroni, and Methoni – were free to engage in regional trade, but the latter never amounted to much.[18] Confronted by early signs of waning commercial power and mounting military expenses, in 1516 the rulers of Venice for the first time officially allowed Jews to reside in the city (and allotted them an island on the outskirts of town that was soon named the "ghetto") in return for paying high taxes and the delivery of banking services to the poor. Not long after, in 1524, the Republic relaxed its policies by opening the trade with continental Greece to everyone, including the increasing number of Ottoman Jews who were active in the area. In 1541, following a humiliating peace with the Turks, the Senate invited "Levantine" (i.e., Ottoman) Jews to settle in the ghetto and granted them favorable exemptions from customs duties. In so doing, it sought to undermine Ottoman commercial power both in the Levant and in the Black Sea, from where the sultan banned all non-Ottoman subjects until 1774. As always in the pre-modern maritime world, authorities could not easily ascertain the 'nationality' of merchants, sailors, and mariners, but Ottoman Jews could now serve the interests of Venetian trade better than the Republic's noblemen and citizens. In this and other instances, Jews thus acted as middlemen across political frontiers.

[18] Eliyahu Ashtor, "The Jews in the Mediterranean Trade in the Fifteenth Century," in Jürgen Schneider, ed., *Wirtschaftskräfte und Wirtschaftsweg: Festschrift für Hermann Kellenbenz,* vol. I: *Mittelmeer und Kontinent* (Stuttgart, 1978), 441–54, esp. 448).

Some of the Levantine Jews trading with Venice mobilized immense capital. When one of them, Ḥayyim Saruq, went bankrupt in 1566, his investments alone nearly matched those of the entire community of Venetian merchants residing in Constantinople.[19] In order to entice the most entrepreneurial among Ottoman Jews, the Venetian government established a clear separation along economic lines between Levantine and Italian/Ashkenazic Jews residing in the ghetto: the former were to specialize in Mediterranean trade while the latter were confined to money-lending and the retail of used clothing (*strazzaria*). This line of demarcation shifted again after 1589, when Ponentine Jews arriving from Iberia were welcomed in the ghetto and given freedom to trade in all Venetian territories.[20] The economic influence of these Ponentines soon eclipsed that of all other Jewish groups, although some Levantine families were quick to cooperate with the new immigrants.

Economic rivalry between Christian and Muslim powers also shaped Ottoman policies. Until the third quarter of the sixteenth century, the Ottomans wielded considerable commercial power. A great many Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 found refuge in Ottoman territories. There they engaged in trade, acted as customs collectors, and invested in various manufacturing sectors. By the 1520s, Salonika became the only city with a majority Jewish population and was a leading producer of woolen cloths. Jewish refugees from Iberia, Sicily, and Provence introduced new techniques that enhanced the local production, and became the primary exporters of Salonika's cloths to Italy. According to recent estimates, in the mid sixteenth century Salonika produced approximately 40,000 pieces of woolen cloth per year, and thus was one of the most important exporters of this product in the Mediterranean.[21] By the last quarter of the century, however, diminishing supplies of raw materials, a heavier tax burden, and increased competition from the English "new draperies" curtailed the size and profitability of the Salonika industry.

Among the wealthiest New Christian families that sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire were the legendary Mendes/Nasi. Heading the family in Lisbon and Antwerp were Francisco and his brother (and business partner) Diogo (d. 1543), who controlled a large share of the imports into Portugal of pepper and Asian spices, and their redistribution to northern Europe.

[19] Arbel, *Trading Nations*, 24–5.

[20] Ibid.; Benjamin Arbel, "Jews in International Trade: The Emergence of the Levantines and Ponentines," in Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid, eds., *The Jews of Early Modern Venice* (Baltimore, 2001), 73–96.

[21] Benjamin Braude, "The Rise and Fall of Salonica Woollens, 1500–1650: Technology Transfer and Western Competition," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991), 216–36, esp. 221.

On Francisco's death, his wife Beatrice, better-known as Doña Gracia Nasi (*c.* 1510–69), joined Diogo in Antwerp. Chased by the Inquisition, she and her skillful nephew Joseph (João) were able to flee to Venice. Initially, the local authorities turned a blind eye to their crypto-Judaism but soon ordered the confiscation of half of their assets. Once again, Beatrice engineered a flight and succeeded in bringing her fortunes to safety in Ferrara. There, for the first time, she embraced Judaism openly and began to sponsor a widespread network of agents who helped poor Marranos (Jews forcibly converted to Catholicism) find their way out of Portugal. The fate of this family was of concern to several states. An agreement sealed between Venice and the sultan's emissaries dictated the terms of Beatrice's transfer to Constantinople, from where she continued to act as the head of a commercial house and as a philanthropist. Her wealth gave her unparalleled political influence. She persuaded the sultan to demand the release of the New Christian merchants of the Adriatic port city of Ancona, who had been arrested following the 1555 bull *Cum nimis absurdum*. The papal authorities ruling the city nonetheless proceeded to burn twenty-four of them at the stake. Doña Gracia rallied support across Jewish and Ottoman elites to organize a boycott of Ancona and divert its rich traffic with the Levant to the nearby town of Pesaro. Conflicts within Jewish society finally brought this daring protest to an end.[22]

During the seventeenth century, Jewish trade in the eastern Mediterranean declined markedly as the French and English supplanted Venice as the principal Christian powers in the region. The loss of Crete to the Ottomans after a protracted war (1645–69) was a major blow to Venetian sea power. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while they continued to supply crucial services as translators and brokers, Ottoman Jews no longer carried on direct trade with Venice and other European ports. This shift was most visible in Smyrna (modern-day Izmir), which became a principal Ottoman hub of international trade and soon fell into the English orbit. The role that Levantine Jews had played in the sixteenth century was now taken over by a host of Sephardic families based in Livorno and, to a lesser extent, Venice, who sent off their young kin to the Levant and North Africa. Their activities developed in conjunction with the French and represent a revealing case of the types of alliances and rivalries that could develop between Jewish merchants and state authorities. Until at least the mid eighteenth century, traders and sea captains from Marseille profited from the cargoes of Asian staples that the Sephardim

[22] Cecil Roth, *Doña Gracia of the House of Nasi* (Philadelphia, 1948); Miriam Bodian, "Doña Gracia Nasi," in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*: Jewish Women's Archive, http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/nasi-dona-gracia.

placed on their ships; the latter, in turn, benefited from the diplomatic protection that the French provided them in the Ottoman territories. This marriage of convenience did not lead to the readmission of the Jews in Marseille but did nevertheless enrich both parties. Aleppo and Tunis became the principal nodes in the networks that Italian Sephardim wove in the Muslim Mediterranean and demonstrate the continued vitality of Mediterranean trade throughout the eighteenth century.

The European trans-oceanic expansion fostered new forms of cooperation and competition between Jewish entrepreneurship and state-sponsored commercial ventures. The expulsion of Jews from Iberia coincided with a new expansionist phase in the formation of European overseas empires, particularly in the Atlantic. In spite of its missionary goals, at the turn of the sixteenth century the Portuguese crown allowed New Christians to trade with its territorial holdings in India and Brazil, only to revoke those policies once it consolidated its commercial power. While royal contracts governed the import and re-export of Asian spices, naval officers and ship workers on the *carreira da Índia* were allowed to carry on board small quantities of goods and sell them outside of the royal monopolies. There is ample evidence that New Christians took advantage of these privileges and so acquired control of a considerable portion of the import of precious stones from India and their re-export to Antwerp, where the cutting and polishing industry was located.[23] After the union of the Portuguese and Castilian crowns in 1580, the role of New Christian merchants across the Iberian Atlantic grew significantly. Lured by the opportunity to infiltrate the trade with Spanish America, many Portuguese Marranos relocated to Madrid and Seville, from where they engaged in both colonial commerce and banking.

Spain's ambition to control every aspect of its transatlantic trade proved impossible to achieve, less because of the weaknesses in the transport infrastructure than because of the difficulty involved in raising capital and monitoring the movement of people, goods, and information. Contraband was congenital to Atlantic trade. Greater and lesser New Christian families crisscrossed the Atlantic in search of better fortunes. Some attained a grip on the slave trade and the sugar plantations in Brazil and the Caribbean in the late sixteenth century. Among them, Manuel Bautista Pérez stood out until his arrest by the Inquisition of Lima in 1635. After an apprenticeship with his uncle in Peru, he rose to the top of a small family clan that, through blood and marriage ties, wielded considerable economic influence across vast distances. Pérez and others smuggled large quantities of Peruvian silver down to Portuguese Brazil and thus subverted

[23] James C. Boyajian, *The Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580–1640* (Baltimore, 1993).

the internal organization of the Iberian empires (on paper, even if ruled by the same king between 1580 and 1640, Spain and Portugal were supposed to manage their respective empires independently). At the height of its activities, the commercial house led by Pérez in partnership with his brothers-in-law Pedro and Sebastian Duarte and his uncles Diego Rodriguez and Simon Dias Pinto counted as many as eighty regular correspondents across Portugal, Castile, the African Coast, New Spain, and the Caribbean.[24]

Back in Madrid, Portuguese New Christians began to arrive in greater numbers after the crowning of Philip III in 1621. The king's plenipotentiary, Count-Duke Olivares, courted New Christian bankers as part of his efforts to strengthen the Spanish economy. Starting in 1627, he awarded them more and more of the contracts to run royal finances (*asientos*), which had previously gone to Genoese businessmen. Principal among these contracts were those for the transport of American silver to Europe and its delivery to those locations where the crown most needed it for its military enterprises. By handling these contracts, some New Christians, like Jorge de Paz Silvera, accumulated among the largest fortunes in the kingdom. The crown also farmed out other monopolies, including the sale of tobacco, salt, cacao, and pepper, as well as the collection of customs duties on inland trade (*puertos secos*) and foreign trade (*almojarifazgos*), and New Christians competed for the management of some of these.[25]

What Fernand Braudel called "the 'age' of great Jewish merchants," which in his scheme followed the age of the Fuggers and that of the Genoese, began to falter in the 1640s. Under pressure from internal opposition and disastrous military campaigns in the Low Countries and northern Italy, Olivares was removed from his position in 1643, and with him the influence of Portuguese bankers at court all but disappeared. A year earlier, a series of trials conducted by the Inquisition in Mexico City crushed what Israel calls "a vast transatlantic clandestine diaspora" – the formidable network of New Christian merchant families that moved European textiles, American silver, Chinese porcelain, African slaves, and other colonial goods across the Atlantic and the Pacific.[26] After the bankruptcy of the Spanish crown in 1647, Amsterdam overshadowed Madrid as the premier site of Jewish banking and trade.

[24] Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (Oxford, 2007), 102.

[25] Carlos Álvarez Nogal, *El crédito de la monarquía hispánica en el reinado de Felipe IV* ([Castile and León], 1997).

[26] Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora*, 97.

From its small beginnings in the 1590s, the Sephardic community of Amsterdam grew into the largest and wealthiest Jewish settlement in Europe by the mid seventeenth century. The Twelve Years' Truce (1609–21) between Spain and the United Provinces had benefited the Sephardim of Holland. After the embargo against Dutch ships in the ports of Castile and Aragon was imposed for a second time in 1621, commerce between Iberia and northern Europe was diverted to Hamburg for a period of two decades. As a result, diamonds, sugar, indigo, cochineal, and silver enriched the Hanseatic city. But, by then, Amsterdam had become the capital of the world economy and the pivot of far-flung Sephardic networks that spanned the globe. During the years when the United Provinces controlled Northern Brazil (1630–54), the oldest synagogue in the Americas began to operate in Recife and its members to invest in sugar, which was shipped raw out of Pernambuco to be refined in Amsterdam. Although the Dutch state chartered a West India Company in 1621 to counter Iberian power in the Atlantic, after 1638 the Company's monopoly was restricted to African slaves, war munitions, and the red natural dye known as Brazil-wood; and after 1648 it was further eroded. Dutch Sephardim were thus instrumental in transplanting sugar from Brazil to Curaçao and Surinam, where they thrived as planters as well as engaged in profitable contraband with the English Caribbean.[27] In Amsterdam, the arrival of Ashkenazic refugees from the Thirty Years' War and the pogroms of eastern Europe increasingly challenged the Sephardic dominance within the Jewish community. In the diamond industry, a social-economic hierarchy developed whereby Sephardic owners employed Ashkenazic workers. By the mid eighteenth century, a role reversal was slowly under way, and a few Ashkenazic Jews themselves became important diamond dealers and producers.

Nowhere in early modern Europe did Jews exert as wide an economic influence as they did in Holland during its Golden Age. By contrast, the diamond trade was the only niche of the English economy in which Jews held a significant (if not dominant) position after the readmission to England in 1656. The English (and later British) Atlantic – the fastest-growing European commercial sector in the eighteenth century – was open to all subjects of the kingdom (with the exception of the profitable but limited domains chartered to the Hudson's Bay Company and the Royal African Company). But only a minority of prosperous Jews residing in England at the time went through the expensive process of acquiring the status of crown's subjects or a so-called letter of endenization, which conferred second-class citizenship in the Empire. While some, including

[27] Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585–1740* (Oxford, 1989), 156–70, 236–40; Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora*, 511–32.

the Salvador family, played a role in the trade with North America, Jewish families never secured a position comparable to that of the most influential English, Scottish, and Quaker merchants.[28]

When compared to the Jews of England and Holland, those in the German and Polish territories were less urbanized and lived in a more precarious situation. Glückel of Hameln (1646–1724) and her first husband ran a small but successful jewelry business across central Europe. They did well enough to marry off one of their daughters to a rich Amsterdam Sephardic and to come close to arranging for their son to marry the daughter of the great Viennese banker Samuel Oppenheimer (1630–1703). Yet on numerous instances they felt hunted by unsympathetic political authorities or by the Christian populace.[29] The fate of the upper echelons of German Jewry was tied to public finance, and thus also to the arbitrariness of sovereign rulers. The Thirty Years' War (1618–48) intensified this process, which hinged on the so-called Court Jews (*Hofjuden*). In return for large loans and military supplies, both the Habsburg emperors and local princes granted rights of residence and ad hoc privileges to a handful of Jews. According to Jonathan Israel, we should not draw too sharp a contrast between the Ashkenazic Court Jews and the Sephardic elite of Amsterdam and London. In Holland, Iberian Jews began to serve the Estates General as diplomats, to replenish the state's coffers, and to provision the army as early as the 1640s, and continued to fulfill these functions through the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713.[30] Surely there is a parallelism between Samuel Oppenheimer, the most important Jewish army supplier and a close aide, first, to the elector of the Palatinate and then to the Emperor, and the group of Dutch Sephardim who sustained the military campaigns of William of Orange (1672–1702), the *stadhouder* of the United Provinces who ascended to the English throne in 1688. However, there are limits to this analogy. Overseas trade figured more prominently in the lives of Sephardim than in those of their brethren in the Holy Roman Empire. Moreover, service to the state played a different role in different parts of the Sephardic diaspora itself: in Amsterdam and London, Jews served as diplomats or army contractors to a greater extent than in Livorno and Venice. Finally, even those German Court Jews who climbed to the top of the economic and

[28] J. M. Ross, "Naturalisation of Jews in England," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 24 (1970–3), 59–74; Edgar Samuel, "The Jews in English Foreign Trade – A Consideration of the 'Philo-Patriae' Pamphlets of 1753," in J. M. Shaftesley, ed., *Remember the Day: Essays on Anglo-Jewish History Presented to Cecil Roth by Members of the Council of the Jewish Historical Society of England* (London, 1966), 123–43.

[29] Marvin Lowenthal, ed., *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln* (New York, 1977), 95–9, 111 (on business and marriages), 9, 195–6 (on discrimination).

[30] Israel, *European Jewry*, 108–9, 124.

social ladder could suffer persecution, as demonstrated by the notorious trial of Joseph Süss Oppenheimer in 1737.

Across western and central Europe, the overall economic influence of Jews declined in the course of the eighteenth century. In 1713, the Treaty of Utrecht assigned to Great Britain the exclusive right to supply the Spanish colonies in the Americas with African slaves – a branch of trade previously dominated by the Amsterdam Sephardim. In addition, during the 1720s the Iberian Inquisitions launched what were arguably the most violent campaigns to eradicate all remaining New Christians.[31] Across and beyond Europe, a growing intervention of the state in economic affairs curtailed the role of both Sephardim and Ashkenazim, whether because the rise of militarized and territorial European colonialism curbed the need for private merchants who acted as intermediaries and interlopers or because the incentives to build new manufacturing plants displaced Court Jews. By the mid eighteenth century, the majority of German Jews lived in poverty and the Dutch communities subsidized the emigration of their growing number of poor families. The crashes of the Amsterdam stock market in the 1770s and the Napoleonic occupation of Livorno in 1796 undermined the two most vibrant Sephardic hubs in northern and southern Europe.

THE WORKINGS OF A TRADING DIASPORA

Europe's commercial expansion during the early modern period was aided by the military, diplomatic, and financial support of the state. Jewish merchants lacked their own state as well as the ability to form exclusive companies chartered by the sovereign authorities (in England, they could not even join the top governing boards of the companies chartered by the crown). How, then, did they succeed in exerting a significant influence over commercial routes that spanned the globe? Their specific strategies are hard to discern because few private business records of Jewish traders survive. This documentary dearth frustrates our attempts to gain a full picture of Jewish commercial activities. Most of the business papers of New Christian merchants from Spain and Portugal are preserved in the Inquisition files of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and were often purged according to the criteria for which the Inquisition was collecting them. In Bordeaux and Livorno, a few precious collections of business letters are preserved but date only to the eighteenth century.[32] In Amsterdam, such collections are scarcer,

[31] Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora*, 574–83.

[32] On Bordeaux, see Richard Menkis, "The Gradis Family of Eighteenth-Century Bordeaux: A Social and Economic Study" (Ph.D. thesis, Brandeis University, 1988); José do Nascimento Raposo, "Don Gabriel de Silva, a Portuguese-Jewish Banker in

and the economic strategies of Jewish investors have to be gleaned through notarial records.[33] Private records of merchants operating in the Habsburg and Polish–Lithuanian territories are even rarer.[34]

Some conclusions nonetheless emerge from reading official records against the grain, and from the extant business papers. First, although they drew considerable financial and logistical resources from kith and kin, Jewish merchants also developed durable trading relations with non-Jews in order to expand the range of their activities. Second, Jewish merchants as a whole worked both in collaboration with and to circumvent or undermine state institutions.

Economic historians debate the degree to which legal or social factors helped investors curb the risks of long-distance trade in the early modern period, when means of communication and legal enforcement were considerably weaker than they are today. Secure property rights, cheap and reliable economic information, as well as accessible and impartial tribunals for foreign traders are generally considered the essential ingredients for the rise of impersonal markets. Seventeenth-century England and the Netherlands were leaders in all these areas. This is not to say that regions where legal and economic institutions were less advanced did not continue to provide highly profitable opportunities for trade or were always subsumed in a semi-colonial state of exploitation. Regrettably, no detailed study exists that compares the business organization of Jewish firms in different parts of Europe or the degree to which recourse to civil and commercial tribunals affected the strategies of Jewish merchants. More detailed comparisons of the ways in which Jewish merchants conducted their financial and trading activities across Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic would not only enrich Jewish economic history but also advance our understanding of early modern commercial capitalism more generally.

Eighteenth-Century Bordeaux" (Ph.D. thesis, York University, Toronto, Ontario, 1989). On Livorno, see Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, 2009).

[33] Beginning in 1967, English summaries of all notary records concerning Portuguese New Christians and New Jews registered in Amsterdam from 1595 to 1639 have been published as an appendix to most issues of the journal *Studia Rosenthaliana* under the title "Notarial Records Relating to the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam up to 1639."

[34] A valuable addition to the literature is a recent study based on several fragmentary sources: Cornelia Aust, *The Jewish Economic Elite: Making Modern Europe* (Bloomington, 2018).

Family and group solidarity, it is often maintained, was the glue of Jewish commercial networks. But family and group solidarity was not a given, nor is it a sufficient explanation for the working of Jewish networks. Economic as much as cultural reasons explain the persistence of family partnerships among Jewish merchants. Endogamous marriages (especially those between uncles and nieces and between first cousins) facilitated the circulation of wealth and the monitoring of misconduct among allied families. At the same time, reliance on kith and kin was by no means synonymous with economic insularity. To begin with, there never existed one single Jewish commercial diaspora. A multiplicity of "diasporas within a diaspora" (to borrow another felicitous phrase from Jonathan Israel) developed among the Sephardim alone, because of the willingness of families and individuals to relocate in response to push and pull factors and as a consequence of the diversification created by marital and economic alliances across the diaspora. Moreover, both Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews engaged in protracted credit relations with non-Jews and thus expanded their circles of suppliers, customers, agents, and partners. A central question confronting historians of Jewish economic activities concerns the formal and informal means through which traders and entrepreneurs secured the cooperation of coreligionists and gentiles.

What most characterized the first century and a half of the early modern Sephardic commercial experience was the risky cooperation between those who lived as New Christians in Iberian territories and those who had embraced Judaism elsewhere, and the fluid religious identity of many among both groups. Economic historians have been the least interested in issues of religious identity. This neglect has unfortunately resulted in an oversimplification of prevailing explanations of the sources of solidarity that governed the collaboration between various merchants of Iberian descent. Somewhat provocatively, Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert has suggested that we sideline questions of religious belief and accept instead the existence of a composite "Portuguese Nation," in which sincere converts to Catholicism, committed crypto-Jews, and individuals with interchanging religious affiliations regularly sealed business deals with each other. Through face-to-face interaction and letter writing, all of them probed the proficiency and solvency of prospective customers and seasoned agents alike. Epistolary collections seized by the Inquisition show that New Christians vouched for each other's reputation across the Atlantic but also slandered those who betrayed their confidence.[35]

Available scholarship throws only a dim light on the sources of trust that linked those crypto- and professing Jews who did business together in the

[35] Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean*, 84–6.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when crypto-Judaism was a widespread phenomenon in Iberian territories and in the southwest of France. We know that individual merchants occasionally switched religious allegiance and that members of the same family could embrace different confessions. We also have ample evidence that *conversos* operating across the Franco-Spanish border and the Atlantic cooperated with Jews in Amsterdam, Hamburg, Venice, and Livorno, particularly until the 1640s, when the Spanish Inquisition cracked down on *converso* networks in both Iberia and colonial America, and before the Dutch lost their possessions in northern Brazil in 1645. Thus, when the Twelve Years' Truce expired in 1621, the Amsterdam Sephardim turned to Portuguese New Christians, rather than to gentile Flemish and Dutch merchants in Lisbon and other Iberian ports, in order to bypass the Spanish embargo. Together they established a profitable network of smugglers who carried silver and wool to northern Europe via Navarre and Bayonne through the 1630s.[36] The risks were many, because the Inquisition remained vigilant, but since contraband reduced the chances of making recourse to a tribunal, solidarity across the New Christian – New Jewish divide likely worked to prevent misbehavior, or, when necessary, to punish it through extra-legal sanctions.

Wherever Jews had or developed communal institutions, these contributed – in different forms and to different degrees – to monitoring the business integrity of their members. Although not prominent, rules about economic conduct and punishments for those who infringed upon them figure in the statutory norms of several communities (*askamot*); rabbis and lay judges regularly sorted out minor and major disputes over economic matters, whether in courts or via arbitration. As mentioned, the Ashkenazim were particularly concerned with the economic conduct of their fellow Jews because of the legal retaliations that infractions entailed. But the Sephardim were hardly insensitive to this issue. Their degree of jurisdictional autonomy varied greatly – virtually none in Venice, weak in Amsterdam, and considerable in Livorno. Most of these communities' leaders were merchants and bankers themselves, and thus displayed a vested interest in preserving the collective reputation of their fellow Jews.[37]

Anecdotes about the travails met by Jews appearing before gentile courts abound. Glückel of Hameln relays that her father-in-law sued his son in a secular court, incurring considerable expense and no

[36] Israel, *European Jewry*, 107.

[37] On the community structure of Amsterdam Sephardim, see Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden, 2000). On Livorno, see Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*.

resolution to their quarrels, before resorting to the mediation of the rabbis in Frankfurt.[38] Only systematic research will establish the patterns of Jewish merchants' reliance on formal courts. For now, it is essential to note two trends that are only in apparent contradiction with one another. On the one hand, Jewish merchants had ever more frequent recourse to civil and commercial tribunals to enforce their business contracts with other Jews and with non-Jews. Whether in the bustling Atlantic and Mediterranean ports, the Hanseatic towns or at the fairs in the Habsburg territories, public authorities gave local and foreign merchants access to legal forums for the adjudication of disputes over property rights in an effort to sustain commercial exchanges. The expansion of international trade also favored the standardization of contractual forms used across political lines, even if no universal legal codes or systems of arbitration were ever devised in the early modern period. On the other hand, merchants continued to rely on informal reputational control to minimize their recourse to formal tribunals. This apparent divergent trend is easily explained. Certain economic contracts (marine insurance policies, short- and medium-term bills of credit, and freight contracts, for example) were more easily enforceable in courts than others. In contrast, the delegation of economic decisions to distant agents remained a central feature of long-distance trade, and yet disputes between commissioners and agents were not always best served by appeal to a judicial forum. It was expensive to hire legal representatives to appear before a judge in a distant location; not every town had courts that were fair to Jews; and, at any rate, commission agency was a highly incomplete type of contract for which legal remedies were rarely a solution.

By the early eighteenth century, the Sephardim of Livorno trading with Lisbon preferred to hire business agents who were not New Christians. They entrusted Florentine, Genoese, and others with multiple tasks but especially with the sale of their Mediterranean coral in India and the import of diamonds and precious stones, which were then for the most part re-exported to Amsterdam and London. Florentine and Genoese merchants in Lisbon, in turn, availed themselves of the services of a host of Hindu traders in Portuguese India, where Jews were proscribed. Certain written contracts were of great help in facilitating business across these vast distances and between these religiously diverse groups. Thus, Livorno Jews sent along copies of powers of attorney and bills of lading to be presented to any customs officials or insurance underwriters who disputed a claim. But access to formal litigation was costly and not necessarily effective. As in other niches of early modern

[38] Lowenthal, *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*, 29–30.

trade, business letters offered a most useful tool for forging alliances and monitoring agents, not only within a closed diaspora but also with agents who were cultural outsiders.[39]

MONEY AND JEWS BETWEEN CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION AND MARKET PRACTICES

Nowadays, rarely do economic historians examine ideas about the market and its actors in their studies of concrete market institutions. Such omission is unwarranted when we write about the economic activities of Jews in early modern Europe. More often than not, Christian theological views of Jews suffused policies of economic segregation enacted by Christian secular governments. Jewish pawnbroking in the late Middle Ages is a case in point: the identification of Jews with usury led authorities to relegate real-life Jews to the role of moneylenders. But even as the range of commercial and financial activities in which Jews were engaged expanded considerably after the sixteenth century, other forms of exclusion persisted. Baptism remained a prerequisite to join a craft guild; laws governing real estate and land ownership often discriminated against Jews; and even in the most commercially oriented societies, such as eighteenth-century England, Jews were barred from certain branches of overseas trade. All in all, the European economic expansion of the early modern period provided Jews with growing opportunities to interact with non-Jews and prompted several governments to expand the privileges that regulated the presence of Jewish communities in their territories. At the same time, commerce and religious toleration did not evolve along a singular, progressive trajectory.

In the early modern Christian imagination, the juxtaposition of Jews and money gave way to two opposite figures: that of all-powerful plutocrats and conspirators, and that of the parasitical poor. Both figures drained resources from the Christian commonwealth.[40] Sometimes the two collapsed into one, as when Christian traders perceived even the poorest among Jewish shopkeepers, salesmen, and peddlers as competitors, and lamented their excessive economic power, as shown by the "Petitions of the Estates to the Great Elector" in Brandenburg-Prussia, submitted in 1672.[41] In the European cities where Sephardic families settled, wealthy financiers

[39] Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*.

[40] Derek J. Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley, 2001), 22.

[41] Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, "Jewish Economic Activity in Early Modern Times," in R. Po-Chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish–Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1995), 91–101.

loomed larger than life in the Christian public imagination. The identification of New Christians with wheelers and dealers was so pervasive as to give way to a terminological slippage. The Portuguese expression for businessmen, *homens de negocios* (and its Spanish equivalent, *hombres de negocios*), became synonymous with New Christians. Not only did the expression carry a derogative connotation because it assumed that all New Christians were crypto-Jews, but it also inaccurately described all New Christians as involved in high-level commercial and financial transaction (*negocios*). In fact, when brought before the Spanish Inquisition, many New Christians described themselves as *mercadores de todos generos*, that is, as traders in all sorts of goods, an expression that encompassed petty traders and itinerant merchants selling tobacco, linens, and only a few luxury products like saffron.[42]

Jewish and Christian authorities alike mobilized these enduring stereotypes to advance their respective interests. In 1612, the Senate of Hamburg ultimately quashed the opposition of local merchants and the Lutheran clergy who, for different reasons, opposed the admission of New Christians and Jews to the city. In Marseille, by contrast, the royal government had to cede to the Chamber of Commerce (which represented the interests of local wholesale Christian merchants, financiers, and ship-owners) and issued a decree of expulsion in 1682. In a bold and effective move, some Jewish leaders turned prevailing negative stereotypes to their advantage. Deploying the trope according to which Jews excelled in trade, they advocated the expansion of rights conferred onto Jews and extolled the economic contributions they could bring to Christian states and societies. Venetian Rabbi Simone Luzzatto's *Discorso circa il stato degl'ebrei* (1638) provided the model for this type of early modern Jewish economic apologetics. Luzzatto wrote in the wake of a corruption scandal that endangered the status of Jews in the ghetto. To counter Christian fears, he presented the Venetian Senate with an inflated portrait of the customs duties that Jews paid to the impoverished coffers of the Republic.[43] When the Amsterdam Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel set off to promote the readmission of the Jews to England in 1655, he reasoned along the same lines in his *Humble Addresses* to Cromwell.[44]

[42] David L. Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580–1700* (Philadelphia, 2004), 54–5.

[43] Simone Luzzatto, *Discorso circa il stato degl'ebrei* . . . [Venice, 1638] (anastatic reprint, Bologna, 1976); Benjamin Ravid, *Economics and Toleration in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Background and Context of the Discorso of Simone Luzzatto* (Jerusalem, 1978); Giovanni Favero and Francesca Trivellato, "Gli abitanti del ghetto di Venezia in età moderna: dati e ipotesi," *Zakhor: Rivista di storia degli ebrei d'Italia* 7 (2004), 9–50.

[44] *The Humble Addresses* in Lucien Wolf, ed., *Menasseh Ben Israel's Mission to Oliver Cromwell* (London, 1901), 82–9; Benjamin Ravid, "'How Profitable the Nation of the

That these appropriations proved effective is evidence that stereotypes lived on in spite of the considerable intermingling of Jews and non-Jews in the marketplaces of early modern Europe and its overseas empires. The cultural effects of this intermingling were multi-faceted. On the one hand, business letters and merchant manuals bear evidence of a growing indifference to religion in the everyday practices of trade. A few Sephardic Jews translated how-to books written by gentiles or even authored their own with no distinctive Jewish features.[45] Merchants of different confessions and faiths also attended each other's religious ceremonies and exchanged greetings on religious holidays one of the parties did not celebrate. On the other hand, the incorporation of Jews in broader trading networks often generated a cultural backlash. Exaggerated images of Jewish influence on long-distance trade and finance were nearly ubiquitous. Meanwhile, the increased sophistication and diffusion of arcane financial instruments intensified anxieties about how to distinguish between legitimate and fraudulent credit practices. These anxieties, in turn, nourished new fantasies in which presumptions about a Sephardic domination of international trade mingled with older associations between Jews and usury.[46]

CONCLUSION

With few exceptions, the principal role of Jews as economic actors in early modern Europe was one of commercial suppliers, distributors, and intermediaries rather than producers of agricultural or manufacturing goods. Eighteenth-century commentators began a vivacious debate about the causes of this specialization: whether it resulted from external constraints – namely, the discriminatory norms imposed by dominant societies – or from an innate proclivity, possibly fostered by the condition of

Jewes Are': The *Humble Addresses* of Menasseh ben Israel and the *Discorso* of Simone Luzzatto," in Jehuda Rainharz and Daniel Swetschinski, eds., *Mystics, Philosophers, and Politicians: Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honor of Alexander Altmann* (Durham, NC, 1982), 159–80; Jonathan Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce: Economic Ideology and Emancipation in Europe, 1638–1848* (Cambridge, 2008), 12–66.

[45] Josua Sarfatti Pina, *De lichtende Koopmans* (Amsterdam, 1682); Jacob de Metz, *Sendero mercantile, que contiene 240 preguntas fundamentals con sus respuestas, para saber destinguir entre deve a hade aver* (Amsterdam, 1697); Gabriel de Souza Brito, *Norte mercantil y crisol de quentas*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1769–70); Abraham Meldola, *Traduccion de las cartas mercantiles y morales de J. C. Sinapius: en español y portuguez* (Hamburg, 1784).

[46] Benjamin Braude, "The Myth of the Sephardi Economic Superman," in Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, eds., *Trading Cultures: The Worlds of Western Merchants* (Turnhout, 2001), 165–94; Francesca Trivellato, "Credit, Honor, and Representations of Jews in Old Regime France," *Journal of Modern History* 84, 2 (2012), 289–334.

exile or, according to some, by religious ethics. At several points in time, this debate took on inflammatory tones and cast a nefarious shadow on the question itself (most famously in the work of Werner Sombart). Today, it continues to inspire an internalist approach to Jewish economic history.[47] This question, however, is hardly the only significant one that can be asked about the economic activities of the Jews in the early modern period.

Here, I have highlighted the continuities and innovations in the economic roles of Jews in different regions and asked in what ways and to what effect Jews participated in the increasingly competitive arena of early modern European long-distance trade. Their status as a "stateless diaspora" put them at a disadvantage in a world in which sovereign states negotiated trading privileges, chartered oligopolistic companies, and invested in large manufacturing plants. At the same time, precisely their ability to channel people, goods, and capitals across political borders often put Jews in an advantageous position. Whether in the German principalities, the Iberian and Dutch Caribbean, or the eastern Mediterranean, Jewish economic activities developed alongside economic enterprises backed or run by European states. Overall, during the early modern period, European states proved more dependent on Jews in the beginning phases of their fiscal and commercial expansion, and increasingly sidelined Jews as they consolidated their national and imperial political economies. Jonathan Israel considers this trajectory particularly apt to describe the experience of the Sephardim, whom he regards "as simultaneously agents and victims of empire."[48] Jews exploited opportunities created by new political economies of commerce in different European states. They did so by deploying both informal and semi-formal resources (kinship ties that extended across space, communitarian organizations that provided some degree of conformity and oversight, and so forth) but also availed themselves of the legal services, technological infrastructures, and financial tools developed by the state, whether in dealing with their coreligionists or with non-Jews. More comparative studies are needed in order to identify the specific combination of informal and formal sanctions and incentives at work among various segments of the Jewish diaspora and to establish whether Jews, or some among them, relied on trust more than other merchant communities, and in which instances. These issues are central to a better understanding of ethnic minorities in the rise of capitalism.

[47] Aaron Levine, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Judaism and Economics* (Oxford, 2000); Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein, *The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70–1492* (Princeton, 2012).

[48] Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora*, 1.

Contrary to what is often believed, commerce did not consistently weaken the corporate structures of early modern Jewry. In fact, on numerous occasions and in various contexts, merchants relied on those very structures to enforce their contracts, pursue a less than diligent associate, or signal the incentives for an outsider to invest in their ventures. Legally and socially, in the corporate societies of pre-emancipation Europe, a Jewish merchant was always simultaneously a merchant and a Jew. When, where, and how legal and social discrimination affected their economic strategies is an important issue that remains to be fully explored in a comparative perspective. Overall, after the mid sixteenth century, commerce favored new forms of toleration for Jews across most of Europe, but it is important to stress that these forms of toleration were tailored to the segregated social and political order of the Old Regime more than they paved the way to emancipation. When Jewish men in France were granted equality in 1790–1, a new era was inaugurated, one that also affected the economic roles of Jews.

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CHAPTER 6

THE EARLY MODERN JEWISH COMMUNITY AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

ELISHEVA CARLEBACH

INTRODUCTION

For close to a thousand years, from the tenth century if not earlier, Jewish religious, cultural, intellectual, and social life unfolded within the context of particular communal structures. Rooted in the ancient system of privileges granted to Jews allowing them to conduct their affairs according to their own religious laws, Jewish communal life evolved into a diverse, amorphous, yet sophisticated mechanism for group survival. Although Jews had no state during this entire period, they created an astonishing variety of political organizations. Thus, when we speak of Jewish community we refer not to a number of Jews residing in a particular time and place, but to the conscious effort Jews made to organize and adapt creatively to political circumstances that changed over time. This communal life was based on shared religious values, a sense of collective history and destiny, and the need to share resources and responsibilities.

No Jewish community was ever absolutely autonomous, and recent scholarship highlights the invented nature of the concept of a long-enduring, global, and stable pattern of Jewish political life in the premodern period.[1] These organizations evolved at different paces, with governance styles and patterns that varied according to time and place. Some aspects of self-governance were common to most communities: the responsibility of Jews to select representatives, to legislate, to adjudicate disputes, to apportion taxes, to punish civil infractions, and to organize their own social welfare, educational, and religious life. The emergence of communal organizations was far more contingent, their relationship to one another more decentralized, and their structures far more diverse than had previously been believed. At the same time, their presence and utility remain indisputable.

[1] Israel Bartal, *Le-Taqen Am: Neorut u-Leumiyut be-Mizrah Europa* (Jerusalem, 2013), 89–103, refers to "imagined geography"; his analysis there can be expanded to "imagined community."

The legal emancipation of Jews and their integration as individuals within the nation-states, a process that began in the Western nations in the second half of the eighteenth century and continued in various parts of the world through the early twentieth, ended the corporate arrangement; after its demise, its internal cultural consequences began to dissipate. The social, religious, and communal cohesion imposed by the separate status of Jews, and the profound cultural engagement within the Jewish tradition (or from within a "Jewish palette," as Gershon Hundert has termed it) began to weaken as Jews entered and embraced the majority societies and their cultures.

The history of recorded Jewish communal life in the Diaspora after antiquity can be roughly divided into three periods.[2] The first spans from the late tenth through the late thirteenth centuries. The characteristics of this period are the emergence of the theoretical and actual foundations of Jewish community life in Europe and in the Levant, and the growth of Jewish communities within and alongside urban population centers. The second phase spanned the late thirteenth through the late fifteenth centuries, when Europe and its Jews experienced plague and persecution. Jewish communities in western and central Europe struggled for survival, and some were permanently extinguished; in contrast, Jews in the Muslim world, as well as in Spanish and Italian lands, largely enjoyed a more robust political and cultural life.

The third phase coincides with the early modern period, from the early sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, when centralizing states became more aware of the sub-societies operating within them, and Jewish communities became more self-conscious of their place within the larger world. This survey focuses on the latter, early modern period in the evolution of Jewish communal life and governance, while referring to the institutions that preceded it. In periodizing the history of Jewish communal life, this chapter provides an alternative to the approach that emphasizes continuity since antiquity.[3]

[2] The first centuries after the rise of Islam and the parallel period within the Byzantine and Latin Christian worlds have left virtually no internal records of Jewish communal life.

[3] Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, and Noam J. Zohar, eds., *The Jewish Political Tradition* (New Haven, 2000), Yitzhak Baer, "The Origins of Jewish Communal Organization in the Middle Ages," in Joseph Dan, ed., *Binah: Studies in Jewish History*, vol. I (Westport, CT, 1988), 59–82, and Salo W. Baron, *The Jewish Community*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1942), trace the roots of Jewish communal terms, concepts, and institutions to biblical and talmudic sources. Baer traced a virtually unbroken line from the Jewish polities of antiquity through the eighteenth century; this approach does not account for the massive evidence of disjunction in the newly formed communities of around the eleventh century.

GOVERNANCE

Classical rabbinic and later geonic (fl. *c.* the seventh–eleventh centuries) writing left little practical guidance for medieval Jews about the shape of Jewish self-government. The hereditary exilarchate with its close ties to the caliphal court in the medieval Islamic world never provided a template for self-governance in other political milieus. The place of the geonic academies within the multi-layered Jewish society of Babylonia/Iraq probably did not wield as great a cultural force as geonic writings indicate.[4] While the Talmud provided a common basis for crafting decisions, the status of post-talmudic ordinances and the extent of their authority remain undetermined.[5] Within the academies, it is unclear whether the Geonim of Babylonia saw their rulings as establishing new legislative norms or simply clarifying the existing (talmudic jurisprudential) ones.[6] Once the geonic academies weakened and disintegrated, Jewish communities needed a new system of governance in any case.

Medieval Jewish legists in North Africa and Spain, as well as those in the Jewish mercantile colonies that arose in northern Europe between the late tenth and thirteenth centuries, created a new system of governance for which they tried to find Jewish legal authority. As they lacked clear and comprehensive precedents, their writings return over and again to the same problem: the locus of communal authority and how to establish and regulate it. Out of strands of talmudic dicta, they created the vocabulary and blueprint for a new type of organization that had few historical antecedents.[7] The

[4] Jews routinely turned to *shariah* courts for certain types of adjudication. See S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society* (Berkeley, 1967–93), II, 364–80. Recent scholarship argues that access to Muslim courts spurred Jewish leaders to protect and defend their privilege of exclusive jurisdiction over Jews: Uriel I. Simonsohn, *A Common Justice: The Legal Allegiances of Christians and Jews under Early Islam* (Philadelphia, 2011), 174–204. As well, the followers of the Babylonian Geonim competed with those of the Palestinian Geonim and Karaites: Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Ithaca, NY, 2008), 3–35. The literary testimony to a powerful geonate should be read in this context.

[5] See, e.g, the extensive discussion of the evolution of the authority of the ordinances attributed to R. Gershom in Elimelech Westreich, *Temurot be-Ma'amad ha-'Ishah ha-Mishpat ha-'Ivri: Massa' ben Masorot* (Jerusalem, 2002).

[6] Robert Brody, "Kelum Hayu ha-Ge'onim Mehokekim?" *Shenaton ha-Mishpat ha-'Ivri* 11–12 (1984–6), 297–315.

[7] For an introduction to the extensive literature on this subject, see Louis Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1924; repr. Westport, CT, 1972); Menahem Ben-Sasson, "Ha-Hanhagah ha-'Atzmit shel ha-Yehudim be-'Artzot ha-'Islam ba-Me'ot ha-7 'ad ha-12," in Avraham Grossman and Yosef Kaplan, eds., *Kehal Yisrael: Ha-Shilton ha-'Atzmi ha-Yehudi le-Dorotav* (Jerusalem, 2004), II, 11–55; Avraham Grossman, "Ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit be-'Ashkenaz ba-Me'ot ha-10 ve-ha-11," in

"founding fathers" of the medieval Jewish communities proposed, debated, and largely established key principles that served as the theoretical foundations for establishing and regulating authority within communities.

The legislative authority that underpinned Jewish communal governance was enacted in each community by a series of ordinances (*gedarim* or, more commonly, *haskamot* or *takkanot*). Early medieval rabbinic authorities were concerned with defining whether communal authority was religious or civil in nature. The late tenth-century R. Meshullam bar Kalonymus, and subsequently R. Gershom (d. 1028), attempted to grant power to communal authority based on the talmudic principle "hefker bet din hefker." This principle established that any recognized communal body, even if it were not a *bet din* ("rabbinical court"), may legislate and retain for itself all the coercive power granted to a *bet din*. This principle was extended by R. Yosef Tov Elem in the eleventh century, who strengthened it with the additional talmudic principle, "bet din makkin ve-'oneshin she-lo' min ha-din": the *bet din*, or the communal body that is like the *bet din*, may legislate and impose its will as a civil sanction even if there is no halakhic precedent for a particular ruling.[8] In the aggregate, this strain of justificatory argument invested Jewish communal authority, even if comprised of untrained laymen, with quasi-religious authority. While religious authority remained the only type with powers of coercion over other Jews, this principle temporarily conferred those powers on non-rabbinic bodies.

A second strain of justification, rooted as well in talmudic terminology, saw the community as a civic corporation rather than as a religious body. The *baraita'* (a form of authoritative early rabbinic statement), "The townspeople may fix weights and measures, prices, and wages, and inflict penalties for the infringement of their rules,"[9] concerned townspeople, rather than rabbis, who organized themselves in order to impose standards and to punish those who violated the communal rules. According to this view, communal authority was not equivalent or comparable to rabbinic authority, but, rather, had a civil, contractual basis.[10] It was often predicated, however,

Grossman and Kaplan, eds., *Kehal Yisrael*, II, 57–74; Walzer *et al.*, eds., *The Jewish Political Tradition*, I, 381–6.

[8] Grossman, "Ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit be-'Ashkenaz," 64–5.

[9] *Bava' batra'* 8b: "רשאין בני העיר להתנות על המדות ועל השערים ועל שכר פועלים ולהסיע על קיצתן" Grossman, "Ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit be-'Ashkenaz," 65–6.

[10] Menachem Elon, *Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles* (Philadelphia, 1994), privileged this approach. Elon defined *takkanah* legislation as deriving from the public or its representatives (the *bene ha-'ir*), rather than from halakhic sources, and therefore constituting a body of Jewish civil, rather than religious, laws. Aviad Hacohen, "Parshanut Takkanot ha-Kahal ba-Mishpat ha-'Ivri" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew

upon the presence or agreement of an *'adam hashuv*, usually defined as the eminent person/scholar, whose participation granted religious legitimacy to the civic will of the majority. This approach became the dominant view by the twelfth century. The view of Jewish communal law as civil rather than religious in nature is strengthened by the character of that law. The form and types of ordinances adopted by Jewish communities often closely resembled those of urban councils in their region. Regulations governing *ḥevrot* (sing.: *ḥevra*; "voluntary societies") paralleled non-Jewish guild and fraternity ordinances, so that in their totality Jewish communal ordinances constituted a hybrid civic and religious-cultural form. Legislators of communal ordinances were careful to name them *gedarim, gezerot, haskamot*, or *takkanot* as a reminder of their liminal halakhic status.[11]

The actual structure of communal leadership was largely shaped by the example of urban governance in the cities of Europe in this period. The very notion of *tove* or *parnase ha-'ir* ("good men of the city"), so common in *kehillah* governance, paralleled and may have derived from the Italian communes which began to flourish at the same time as the founding families of Ashkenazic communities began to migrate from Italy.[12] Regardless of whether the Italian or another model served as the initial template for the oligarchic forms of Jewish self-governance, the parallel is indisputable.

Jews were familiar with non-Jewish ordinances, both local and regional, that pertained to them (often referred to as *Jewry* law to distinguish it from *Jewish* law), and knowledge of the larger legal system provided models and influenced the way they framed Jewish ordinances. The texts of non-Jewish, local ordinances pertaining to Jews were sometimes translated or transcribed in the vernacular in Hebrew letters into the local collection of Jewish communal ordinances.[13] In sum, multiple aspects characterize

University of Jerusalem, 2003), 15, argued that Elon's reading privileged one strand of the sources and discounted the one that viewed these laws as rooted in the religious legal tradition. His work shows that rabbinic authorities operated on *takkanah* legislation according to hermeneutic rules that apply to halakhic legislation.

[11] E. S. Hartom and H. M. D. Cassuto, eds., *Takkanot Kandi'ah ve-Zikhronoteha* [Ordinances and Memories of the Jewish Community of Candia, Crete] (Jerusalem, 1943), xii, xiii.

[12] Reuven Bonfil, "Ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit be-Italia be-Tekufat ha-Renaissans," in Grossman and Kaplan, eds., *Kehal Yisrael*, II, 203–7.

[13] Elijah Capsali (*c.* 1483–1555) collected Venetian laws pertaining to Cretan Jews and their governance in his copy of the communal ordinances. These did not survive in the original Italian; however, a scribe copied a Hebrew epitome of these laws that was appended to the Crete *takkanot*. See Hartom and Cassuto, eds., *Takkanot Kandi'ah*, 153–60. The *pinkas* of Schnaittach included twenty-seven documents written by the non-Jewish government and transcribed into Hebrew letters, regarding the rights of Jews of the region, spanning the first three-quarters of the seventeenth century: Meir Hildesheimer, ed., *Pinkas Kehillat Schnaittach* (Jerusalem, 1992), 92, 128–50.

takkanah legislation: it emerged out of a combination of religious and civil Jewish laws and often applied talmudic or rabbinic jurisprudential rules to procedures that were based on models of local urban administration.

Early rabbinic decisors discussed many aspects of communal authority. The first concerned the rights of individuals, and whether a majority of members of a *kehillah* could impose its will over a dissenting minority. R. Jacob Tam, one of the most eminent rabbinic figures in twelfth-century Ashkenaz, had ruled, problematically, that only unanimously accepted ordinances could be binding on *kehillah* members.[14] Another significant area of concern was the relationship between communal entities. Few precedents existed by which to navigate meta-communal problems, such as whether one community had the right to impose its will upon another, even for the sake of mutual benefit. R. Tam suggested that an individual serve as a meta-communal authority, a *gedol ha-dor* with the status of a supreme court (*bet din gadol*) to resolve meta-communal disputes in the event that friction between two *kehillot* could not be resolved. Ultimately, a principle of autonomy prevailed: each *kehillah* was independent of the others and no *kehillah* was permitted to violate another's jurisdiction, despite its size or importance. In some times and places, inter-communal organizations did arise, but the idea of a supreme authority was never realized.

In the early modern period, a rich variety of specific ordinances continued to be composed and expanded in Jewish communities. Yet, despite their multifarious nature, and its value for historians and legal historians, the early modern corpus of legislation cannot be characterized as particularly innovative. The statutes mostly follow the outlines of ordinances that had come to be familiar centuries earlier, and they presume the authority that had been invested in them by the medieval Jewish legal scholars of the High Middle Ages.[15] One general exception to the lack of legislative innovation is the body of ordinances that arose to address the rise of very large *kehillot*. Some urban concentrations of Jews in the early modern period numbered in the many thousands; they far

[14] Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Unanimity, Majority, and Communal Government in Ashkenaz during the High Middle Ages: A Reassessment," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 58 (1992), 79–106; Yaron Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans: Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century* (Tübingen, 2008), 175.

[15] One exemplary case in which we can compare the earlier layers of ordinances with those that were enacted later is the *Takkanot Candia*, organized and edited by Elijah Capsali in the sixteenth century. Capsali claimed to have copied ordinances from the thirteenth century and from the later fourteenth century, before also including those of his own time in the mid sixteenth century.

exceeded the numbers of Jews in medieval communities. The new population configurations created new areas of communal responsibility which necessitated revised categories of legislation.[16]

AUTHORITY

The abiding tension between the civic and the religious character of Jewish communities underlay the entire structure, and it could never be fully resolved throughout this period. The dynamic relationship between lay and rabbinic leaders reflected this tension to some extent. Early conceptions point to the corporate body itself as the source of authority.[17] Both the lay leadership and the rabbinate as it was constituted in the late medieval and early modern periods formed new templates of authority for Jewish communities. Although the terms "rabbi" and "*tove ha-'ir*" can be found in talmudic literature, prior to the medieval period neither of these titles held the significance and authority they would later acquire. While broad agreement existed concerning the lines of demarcation between the respective jurisdictions of these figures, in practice the lines were often blurred. The modes of election, number, duration, and responsibility of the lay leaders were spelled out in detail in the founding *takkanot* of the communities. The position and role of the rabbi were less explicitly demarcated. The Ashkenazic rabbinate, for example, became more professionalized from the late fifteenth century, with rabbis becoming salaried communal functionaries whose duties to teach and to judge in matters of religion were spelled out in detailed contracts.[18] In the Ottoman Empire, the *hakham* or *marbitz torah* was elected to rabbinic leadership, a position that reached the apogee of its effectiveness from the mid seventeenth through the mid eighteenth centuries.[19]

Although recent assessments characterize the early modern period as beset by a struggle between these two sources of authority, the primary political power in most Jewish communities was located in the body of elected lay leaders.[20] Rabbis could lay claim to prestige and charisma, but

[16] Elhanan Reiner, "'Aliyyat 'ha-Kehillah ha-Gedolah': 'al Shorshe ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit ha-'Ironit be-Folin ba-'Et ha-Hadashah ha-Mukdemet," *Gal-Ed* 20 (2006), 13–37.

[17] Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 140–1, on evidence from genizah documents (apparent only in groups following the Palestinian tradition); on the tradition of appealing to the community in early Ashkenaz, see Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, 15–18; Haym Soloveitchik, *Shu"t ke-Makor Historii* (Jerusalem, 1990), 87–100.

[18] On the professionalization of the rabbinate, see Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, 9; Mordechai Breuer, "The 'Ashkenazic Semikha'" [Hebrew], *Zion* 33 (1968), 15–46.

[19] Meir Benayahu, *Marbitz Torah* (Jerusalem, 1953); Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm*, 292–6.

[20] See David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010), 57–93. Early *takkanot* from Crete regarding *herem* (the "ban") warn: לא ישים אדם חרמים

they were employees of the community and could not dictate to lay leaders. Rabbis were often the most learned people, and the only ones with legal training, in the community, and so were called upon to interpret the statutes. The existential tension between civic and religious leadership, along with the occasional blurring of boundaries and overlapping of spheres of jurisdiction, meant that friction between these two sources of authority was inevitable.[21] Nevertheless, for the most part, the roles of each authority were well established and the points of contention, ferocious as their disputes might have sounded, were the exception rather than the rule. By the eighteenth century, as the existence of autonomous communities was called increasingly into question by centralizing European governments, rabbis and lay leaders knew and understood the interdependence of their positions and tended to support one another's authority.[22] In the Ottoman Empire, by the late eighteenth century, communal authority devolved primarily onto guilds and smaller fraternities, with consequent diminution of the role of community *hakham*.

The mechanics of establishing communal lay leadership followed a broadly shared template with many individual variations. It was always an elected body (and so, following Friedrichs, a male-only one), following patterns from municipalities throughout Europe.[23] Some large communities instituted indirect voting, in which individuals voted for electors, *kesherim*; the titles of the lay leading body also varied greatly, with designations such as *parnasim, manhigim*, and *yehidim* most common.[24] The size and number of the leading body/ies, direct or indirect voting, the

אם לא ברשות הממונים הרשומים ובעצת השרים והחכמים ("A person may not impose bans without the permission of the official lay leaders, the council of the leaders, and the sages"). Note the position of the sages in that list: Hartom and Cassuto, eds., *Takkanot Kandi'ah*, 4.

[21] For Poland, see Adam Teller, "Rabbis without a Function? The Polish Rabbinate and the Council of Four Lands in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *Jewish Religious Leadership: Image and Reality* (New York, 2004), 371–400.

[22] Yigal Sklarin has shown (in an unpublished paper, Yeshiva University) that R. Yehezkel Katzenellenbogen, rabbi of Altona-Hamburg-Wandsbek, tried to use his authority to strengthen the local lay leaders. R. Katriel Judah Leib arrived in Leeuwarden and used his status as rabbi and newcomer to mediate a dispute among the lay leaders, which he hoped would lead to their reconciliation so that they could govern effectively: Stefan Litt, *Pinkas, Kahal, and the Mediene: The Records of Dutch Ashkenazi Communities in the Eighteenth Century as Historical Sources* (Leiden, 2008), 49.

[23] Christopher Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City, 1450–1750* (New York, 1995), 47.

[24] On the indirect vote, see Dov Avron, ed., *Pinkas ha-Ksherim shel Kehillat Pozna [5]381–[5]595 (1621–1835)* (Jerusalem, 1967), xi–xii; in The Hague, five unrelated electors chose the new leadership: Litt, *Pinkas*, 41.

duration of terms, and method of elections differed from place to place. Many communities held elections during the intermediate days of the Jewish holidays when most of the traveling merchants were home. The elections were crucial not only for determining leadership but, even more centrally, for publicly affirming membership of the first rank, as the question of who could vote and hold office was closely linked to who was defined as a stakeholder in the community.[25]

RECORD KEEPING / *PINKASIM*

The emergence of communal record keeping was a hallmark of the early modern period in Europe. Urban institutions maintained extensive records of every kind. Some of the scribal models for *pinkasim* ("records, notebooks") emerged in the late medieval period, but parish registers, for example, emerged only in the sixteenth century, and there is no evidence of sustained record keeping in Jewish communities before the sixteenth century.[26] Not only have *pinkasim* or fragments of *pinkasim* or references to them *not* survived from prior to the sixteenth century, but it seems clear from other materials, such as rabbinic responsa, that Jewish communities in the medieval period used different mechanisms for remembering matters that later would have been committed to writing in a communal record. Thus, keeping written records in a bureaucratic style is an early modern innovation among Jews. By the mid sixteenth century, the number of Jewish communities keeping a formal register of communal activities rose significantly. That the practice spread quickly and widely testifies to the function of written records across Jewish cultures in the early modern period. Some historians see the records as a form of collective communal memory and repository of communal identity.[27] Others view them more as outer-directed, created at the behest of non-Jewish rulers who wanted to tighten their control over all their subjects as they centralized their bureaucracies in the early modern period.[28] This tendency increased in the eighteenth century.

Some *pinkasim* opened with a preamble similar to the introductory sections of a constitution that define national identity, followed by ordinances, records of communal payments and income, alongside many other

[25] Walzer *et al.*, eds., *Jewish Political Tradition*, I, 381–6.

[26] Litt's analysis of community administration and the use of written records constitutes the best discussion of the subject to date. See, esp., Litt, *Pinkas*, 7–8 and 92–113.

[27] Dean P. Bell, *Jewish Identity in Early Modern Germany: Memory, Power and Community* (Aldershot, 2007), 35–65. Sometimes, small rural communities asked larger neighboring communities to preserve their records. See, e.g., Litt, *Pinkas*, 112 n. 79.

[28] Litt, *Pinkas*, 11.

matters related to administering to complex communal needs. Once established, certain records could follow the same form for long periods of time, and often for centuries.[29] Writers of *pinkasim* occasionally expressed awareness that they were creating searchable records for the future. One Schnaittach scribe wrote:

> I have read the *takkanot* of the pinkas of the holy community from beginning to end . . . [The *takkanot* were] instituted by the great men of the land, the luminaries, great rabbis who are named there by their signatures, and they are correct and true according to our holy Torah's law, and worthy of being written. But I also saw that each and every time we needed to search diligently in order to fulfill what is commanded by the *tikkunim* [*takkanot*]. Consequently, there is damage by forgetfulness and we cannot fulfill what is commanded there . . . Therefore I have labored to affix a sign for each and every ordinance, so that it would be easy to find any particular ordinance as needed . . . so that we can fulfill them and they shall stand as a memorial for the ages.[30]

Pinkasim reflected the interconnection between the ritual and religious life of a community and its sense of place and self. Some *pinkese kehillah* included discussion of local customs, while in other cases a rich literature of religious custom tied to the place developed as a self-standing corpus.[31]

Scribal techniques, such as cross-referencing entries, migrated across cultures along with the scribes.[32] New early modern Jewish communities often modeled their ordinances on those of existing communities. Some record keepers maintained libraries of old record books for reference and as manuals of style; they viewed their responsibility to maintain records with professionalism and dedication.[33] In eastern Europe, some Jews regarded the communal *pinkas* as symbolic of a holy scroll and attributed magical and curative powers to it.[34]

This tendency of a young community to model its ordinances on a more venerable one was pronounced among new early modern Sephardic communities in western Europe. In other cases, we do not have the earliest set of ordinances and it is difficult to ascertain which sections of the *takkanot* are copied and formulaic and which are contemporary,

[29] Friedrichs, *Early Modern City*, 257–9.
[30] Hildesheimer, *Pinkas Kehillat Schnaittach*, 328, entry for Dec. 23, 1709.
[31] For an example of customs within a *pinkas*, see Litt, *Pinkas*, 19, regarding rural Oisterwijk. On the intersection of customs and Jewish political life, see Bell, *Jewish Identity in Early Modern Germany*.
[32] Litt, *Pinkas*, 108. [33] Ibid., 110, on a *parnas* who maintained a library of *pinkasim*.
[34] See the citations from A. Rechtman, *Yidishe etnografye un folklor: zikhroynes vegn der etnografisher ekspeditsye, ongefirt fun Sh. An-Ski* (Buenos Aires, 1958), 195, in Litt, *Pinkas*, regarding some Ukrainian towns.

original, and responsive to the immediate needs of the community that adopted them.[35]

Most *pinkasim* were intended to be public records, to testify to decisions taken for all members of a community, and, in some cases, to be examined by non-Jewish authorities, whose intervention in Jewish affairs intensified throughout the early modern period. Some matters, such as individual tax assessments, were of a highly confidential nature and could be kept in separate books. The language of the *takkanot* and other entries could be Hebrew or vernacular, or a combination of these.[36] Even when records were kept in Jewish languages, the introduction of words that referred to local legal concepts was widespread, indicating Jewish familiarity or even competition with that system. In some cases – for example, sixteenth-century Rome – Jewish scribal practices were intimately interwoven with Roman notarial culture.[37] In some communities, language served as a marker of ethnic difference between Jewish communities within one city. Jay Berkovitz has shown that the presence of language from the non-Jewish judicial system intensified in the rabbinical court records of eighteenth-century Metz.[38]

Pinkasim cannot be seen as the full record of a community, but, rather, as an account of administrative matters that community leaders wished to leave on record for future scrutiny. *Pinkasim* are enormously valuable historical sources, but they were only intended to be a partial and public record and can never be said to represent anything close to the full range of human concerns in a pre-modern community.[39] They often do not reflect the life of Jews whose business took them beyond the confines of a

[35] See, e.g., Hartom and Cassuto, eds., *Takkanot Kandi'ah*, 6: "geder le-taharat bet ha-tevilah." Every line rhymes with the one after it. Moreover, a version of this *geder* is repeated nearly verbatim in every iteration of the communal *takkanot* over the centuries. This should alert us to the limitations of relying on *takkanot* collections as historical sources.

[36] Although the *pinkas* of the electors of Posen spanned over two centuries, its scribes maintained literary uniformity throughout. They all used "Ashkenazic Hebrew," in which phonetic spelling and usage led to "errors" that were common in Ashkenazic writing. There was some Yiddish, but no Polish or German at all: Avron, ed., *Pinkas ha-Ksherim*, xiv.

[37] Kenneth Stow, *The Jews in Rome: A Documentary History of the Jews in Italy* (Leiden, 1995).

[38] Jay Berkovitz, *Protocols of Justice: The Pinkas of the Metz Rabbinic Court 1771–1789* (Leiden, 2014), I, chs. 2–3. While some Dutch Jewish communities in the eighteenth century used mostly Hebrew and others primarily Yiddish, all resorted to Dutch in cases involving non-Jews: Litt, *Pinkas*, 108.

[39] The electors of Posen were careful to record their own business in their *pinkas*, primarily their orders concerning other institutions within the community. The remainder of their records were related to other institutions such as the *Va'ad 'arba' 'aratzot* and the

particular Jewish community, or of the many Jews who did not belong to the governing class. Thus, the *pinkas* of a community is a selective and partial record; often, in order to extract meaning that is of value to historians, the sources must be read against the grain and within a larger context.[40] Recent innovative work has focused on class and gender analysis of entries that do not explicitly focus on either of these categories.[41]

The keeper of records, not necessarily a professional scribe, called alternatively *sofer, shammash*, or *ne'eman*, was often privy to all the communal deliberations (although not necessarily a voting member of the community council). Individual styles differed, perhaps reflecting the degree of professionalism of community leaders. Some communities kept books in chronological order and neatly organized, while other records seem to hold jottings in rather haphazard fashion. Although there does not appear to have been a manual or code about how to keep records, widespread conventions emerged for recording certain communal matters and for suppressing or ignoring others. Some areas of the records were deliberately abbreviated, recording only laconic conclusions rather than full deliberations, or identities of individuals concealed. This may have been due to the growing awareness that these records could be used by non-Jewish authorities at will.

Early modern communities were keenly aware of the importance of preserving a written record of their business: "Any matter that is agreed upon by the *kahal*, the *kahal* will immediately be obliged to order the scribe to write it in the *pinkas* of the *kahal*, and they will keep a separate *pinkas* for all matters, from today [1621]."[42] The large number of *pinkasim* that have survived testify to their importance in the eyes of the communities as repositories of local historical memory.

bet din, or to other *takkanot*. The scribes maintained structural uniformity: each *takkanah* had a header, opening, topic, and signature.

[40] Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, 2009), 1–6. The public nature of the communal *pinkas* led some officials to keep a second secret or private record. Examples of such private *pinkasim* that have survived are: for Altona, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Folder AHW/20 and 20a, and The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, ms 10772, jointly covering the years 1767–92; and for Mainz, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, D/Ma7/5. On the latter, see Stefan Litt, citation, trans., and intro., http://www.earlymodern.org/citation.php?citKey=155anddocKey=i.

[41] Noa Shashar, "Agunot and the Men Who Vanished in the Ashkenazi Realm, 1648–1850" [Hebrew] (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 2012); Debra Kaplan, "'To Immerse their Wives': Communal Identity and the Kahalishe Mikveh of Altona," *AJS Review* 36, 2 (2012), 257–79.

[42] Avron, ed., *Pinkas ha-Ksherim*, 3, #12.

TAXATION

Jewish communities collected taxes from their members for two separate purposes. States, empires, and local governments, or more often some complicated combination of these, imposed taxes on Jewish communities collectively. Taxes sustained every political body, of course, but some discriminated against particular groups of people in egregious ways.[43] Jews had paid a punitive fine in the aftermath of the Roman destruction of the Second Temple (68 CE) when a fiscus was imposed upon every Jewish individual, and some continuations of this practice continued into the Christian successor states.[44] In the early Middle Ages, Christian rulers sometimes imposed fines as a permissible means of pressuring Jews to convert, and, with the advent of Islam, the *jizya*, or protection tax, was imposed upon all non-Muslims living in Muslim lands. This tax was often not a mere token but a very substantial sum levied on the non-Muslim populations. By the High Middle Ages, assessing Jews collectively for a very significant sum had become a standard and accepted practice. The disproportionately high tax levied on them was interpreted by some Jews as an inherent part of the exilic burden.[45]

Medieval Christian authorities who granted charters to Jews imposed a sum of money to be paid in exchange for protection within the Christian city.[46] The well-known charter granted by Bishop Rüdiger to the Jews of Speyer (in 1084) states, "When I made the village of Speyer into a town, I thought I would increase the honor I was bestowing on the place if I brought in the Jews . . . on condition that they pay annually three and a half pounds of the money of Speyer for the use of the brethren."[47] It often fell to the communal representative (the *shtadlan*), to negotiate an amount that would be least burdensome to the community.[48] This exchange set the

[43] On the fantastically disproportionate rate of taxation of Jews compared with other subjects, and the multiple types of taxes levied on Jews, see Baron, *The Jewish Community*, II, 248–80; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm*, 151–61.

[44] Martin Goodman, "Nerva, the *Fiscus Judaicus* and Jewish Identity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989), 40–4.

[45] E.g., Yehezkel Landau, *Derushe ha-Tzelah* (Jerusalem, 1966) sermon 8, p. 15b.

[46] James William Parkes, *The Jew in the Medieval Community: A Study of His Political and Economic Situation*, 2nd edn. (New York, 1976), 155–206, contains an extensive discussion of the rise and evolution of medieval charters in Western Christendom.

[47] Wilhelm Altmann and Ernst Bernheim, eds., *Ausgewählte Urkunden zur Erläuterung der Verfassungsgeschichte Deutschlands im Mittelalter: zum Handgebrauch für Juristen und Historiker* (Berlin, 1904), 156, repr. in Roy C. Cave and Herbert H. Coulson, *A Source Book for Medieval Economic History* (Milwaukee, 1936; repr. New York, 1965), 101–2. Text modernized and scanned by Jerome Arkenberg.

[48] E.g., Avron, ed., *Pinkas ha-Ksherim*, 3, #11.

financial relationship at the heart of the Jewish interaction with the Christian world. It is one of the reasons Jews were invited and tolerated within religious cultures that spurned them; the fact of this continuous payment colored relations between Jews and non-Jews. In medieval times, it confirmed the status of Jews in the Holy Roman Empire as *servi camerae Regis* ("servants of the royal chamber").[49] A Polish bishop in the early modern period pointed to the taxes as evidence that the notion of Jewish autonomy was a delusion:

> It is only after you have paid the crown, the provincial governor, the lieutenant governor, and various other officials and lords that you are able to enjoy your synagogues and to live a Jewish life . . . it is true that certain Christian lords hold you in greater esteem than poor Christians. This itself shows that both your living in accordance with the Jewish religion and the favor of these same lords for you have been purchased. These lords esteem you neither for your faith nor for your Jewish way of life, but for the income and payments they have from you.[50]

In addition to the collective sums, individual Jews were often taxed indirectly, e.g. for departing a location – to compensate for the future lost income – or for death and burial. Another common obligation demanded of Jewish communities was the "gift" to be given to the various non-Jewish officials at set times of the year. The sum was often considerable, and recorded among communal expenses.[51] The allocation and collection of taxes became a central function of communal leadership, both an inescapable burden and a source of power. It provides a counterpoint to discussions of what Jewish "autonomy" meant in a particular context.

In addition to the taxes paid as a condition for Jewish collective existence, communities raised taxes to cover a wide array of their own expenses. Depending on the size of the community, its religious functionaries, such as rabbis, teachers, and undertakers, its butchers and bakers, the upkeep of communal buildings, the welfare of members, and charity for local and distant causes all added to the sums that had to be raised from community members. As a result of this inescapable burden, it was incumbent upon communities to regulate closely the number of its members, to see to their financial viability, and to restrict from settlement people who would likely become additional burdens on the community. Financial obligations often

[49] Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd edn., vol. IX (New York, 1965), 135–92, 308–31.

[50] Bishop Kobielski, cited in Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004), 102.

[51] See, e.g., Israel Isserlein, *Terumat ha-Deshen* (Venice, 1519), #195; Stefanie Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence: The Construction of an Early Modern Jewish Community* (Stanford, 2006), 172; Litt, *Pinkas*, 99.

shaped the character of a particular Jewish community, by dictating who could join and by allocating scarce resources and professional opportunities for those members. Determining who was liable to pay a tax was not simply a question of a financial obligation but a fundamental definition of which individuals constituted that community.

The mechanism by which the community had the right to appropriate the property of individuals in the form of taxes had been one of the thorniest halakhic issues regarding the functioning of communities.[52] There is scant provision in Jewish law for this type of tax collection – indeed, the talmudic principle of "ha-motzi' mamon me-havero 'alav ha-re'ayah" (similar to the English-language adage, "possession is nine points of the law") might serve to argue against granting a community the right to levy taxes.

The first rabbinic monograph devoted solely to the questions raised by Jewish communal taxation of individuals appeared in 1600. The complex Ottoman system of taxes gave rise to an outpouring of halakhic debates over tax-related matters in the sixteenth century. *Massa' melekh* of Joseph ibn Ezra "speaks of the laws pertaining to taxes and imposts and all matters that allow our religion to survive among the nations ... and of the assessment by the communities, both according to the law and according to custom, for the laws of taxation are based on custom."[53]

In this introductory statement, Ibn Ezra summarized the dilemma of halakhists who ruled on disputes related to taxes imposed by the communities: there was no body of sources to rely on, only scattered references and diffuse correspondence. The entire structure of medieval communal taxation, like communal governance itself, rested legislatively upon the innovations required by new political realities. They were, therefore, to be classified as *minhag* ("custom"), rather than *din* ("law").

Joseph ibn Ezra described the late sixteenth-century rabbinic decisors as operating within a fractured culture in which many libraries had been dispersed or destroyed by the forced migrations of previous generations. Scholars often had no access to the books they needed to render decisions. Moreover, many of the rabbinic responsa collections addressed local disputes without stating the principles necessary to guide future resolutions. Even Joseph Karo, he complained, aggregated many rules pertaining to

[52] Israel Schepansky, *Ha-Takkanot be-Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1991–3), IV, 486–542; Jacob Bazak, *Hilkhot Missim ba-Mekorot ha-Ivri'm* (Jerusalem, 1964); Joseph ibn Ezra, *Sefer Massa' Melekh* (Salonika, 1601; 2nd edn., ed. S. Spiegel, Jerusalem, 1989 – 2nd edn. based on a different manuscript); Yehoshua Yehudah, *Avodat Massa'* (Salonika, 1846). The primacy of tax rolls in affirming status and identity in the Ottoman Empire made this issue particularly urgent there.

[53] Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Massa' Melekh*, intro.

taxes but did not cite even one resolution for the researcher who needed immediate guidance.

Joseph ibn Ezra restated the principle that, in litigation over money, the possessor has the presumption of right.[54] This opened the interesting question of whether the individual should always be presumed to be the possessor (halakhic *muhzak*), or whether, conversely, the community is held to be the possessor and the individual who disputed an assessment was trying to deprive the community of its rightful possession. The nature of taxes imposed collectively on Jewish communities led to continual conflict as courts tried to balance the rights of one individual against the "community." Any diminution in one assessment meant that other individuals would be obligated to compensate.

In addition to direct assessments, communities imposed indirect taxes – such as those effected via monopolies on various commodities – to enable them to meet their obligations. Baron underscored another consequence of the high taxation to which Jewish communities were subjected, namely their indebtedness. In order to pay the communal bills, many of the communities borrowed money, sometimes from their members, sometimes from *ḥevrot*, and sometimes from non-Jewish individuals, the Church, or the state.[55] Some communities acted as financial institutions, as when individuals granted all their assets to the community in exchange for a guaranteed annuity. Public debt could be incurred due to catastrophe or due to planned management by the local Jewish authorities who saw it as a source of steady income. While communal debt was not a new phenomenon in early modern times, it grew to monumental proportions during this period and became one of the thorniest problems of the age of emancipation. In some cases, the entire value of all communal property was insufficient to cover the communal debt.

Jews who lived in small settlements depended on the larger nearby urban community for vital religious needs. This configuration existed in many parts of the Jewish world. In medieval western Europe, urban Jewish communities remained the standard bearers while the "peripheral" Jewish population was often subsumed administratively under them. After the destruction of urban Jewish life in fourteenth-century western Europe, a new population profile emerged in which Jewish settlement was widely and thinly dispersed with fewer urban centers of Jewish life.

Many rural dispersed Jewish populations nevertheless sought to form some type of communal organization to foster shared interests.[56] These

[54] Ibid. [55] Baron, *The Jewish Community*, II, 270.

[56] On rural patterns in Alsace, Debra Kaplan, *Beyond Expulsion: Jews, Christians and Reformation Strasbourg* (Stanford, 2011), 26–48; on German patterns, Michael Toch,

included the need to pay collective taxes, to share expenses and resources in all religious and lifecycle matters from circumcision to burial and cemeteries, and for common defense when Jews were threatened. Loose confederations of rural Jews with no central communal structure present a compelling variation on the concept and workings of *kehillah* in early modern Europe.[57] This pattern appears in Alsace, in southwestern German lands, and parts of the Dutch countryside. Rabbis often warned their urban community members to be wary of the religious ignorance and lax standards of the country folk, at the same time as they tried to provide some training and guidance in person and with written materials to enable rural Jews to live pious lives.[58]

Medieval western Ashkenazic organizations were small local associations, generally a major city and its surrounding area. Although they sometimes convened jointly, no standing "supra-French" or "supra-German" Jewish communal organizations were formed, in deference to the principle of autonomy of every *kehillah* from the interference of the others. In contradistinction, larger organizations did exist in eastern Europe, particularly in Hungary and Russia, by the thirteenth century. In the early modern period, regional organizations flourished, both in regions that contained large cities (The Council of Four Lands) and in rural areas with no large urban centers.[59]

In some areas, such as the Holy Roman Empire and Castile, a chief rabbi was appointed (late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) to collect the taxes and represent the Jews in various matters.[60] Some communities or meta-communal organizations appointed a formal intercessor (*shtadlan*), to represent interests of Jews to various non-Jewish authorities.[61] Jewish communities closest to the seat of a government bore special responsibility to intercede on behalf of Jews in other places. In capital cities such as

"The Formation of a Diaspora: The Settlement of Jews in the Medieval German Reich," *Aschkenas* 7 (1997), 55–78; on Dutch patterns, Litt, *Pinkas*, 16, 77, 89.

[57] On rural Jewish confederations in German lands, Daniel J. Cohen, *Die Landjudenschaften in Deutschland als Organe jüdischer Selbstverwaltung von der frühen Neuzeit bis ins neunzehnte Jahrhundert: eine Quellensammlung* (Jerusalem, 1996); Eric Zimmer, *Harmony and Discord: An Analysis of the Decline of Jewish Self-Government in 15th-Century Central Europe* (New York, 1970).

[58] E.g., Joseph Stadthagen, *Divre zikkaron* (Amsterdam, 1705).

[59] Litt, *Pinkas*, 182–5; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm*, 164–7.

[60] Yacov Guggenheim, "Jewish Community and Territorial Organization in Medieval Europe," in Christoph Cluse, ed., *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries): Proceedings of the International Symposium Held at Speyer, 20–25 October 2002* (Turnhout, Belgium, 2004), 80–6.

[61] Chava Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, *The Historical Writings of Joseph of Rosheim: Leader of Jewry in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden, 2006); Litt, *Pinkas*, 104.

Prague, Rome, or The Hague, Jews were frequently asked to intercede for their coreligionists. Sometimes, prominent community members who had cultivated ties to the ruling powers stepped in on an ad hoc basis.

Early modern Jewish communities, particularly those with large populations, often contained several formally organized fraternal societies to provide for social welfare needs such as visiting the sick, burying the dead, and raising funds for charitable purposes. Others fulfilled a role in the intellectual and spiritual life of the community. These guild-like circles (*ḥevrot*) appear in some parts of the Jewish world earlier, but they reached their apogee in the early modern period when they flourished in virtually every Jewish cultural sphere.[62] Some historians argue that, rather than seeing the *ḥevrot* as subsidiary circles formed when communities got very large, these circles should be seen as the earliest kernels of Jewish organizational life.[63] From the sixteenth century, they appear in Italy and in Sephardic communities, and by the seventeenth century they flourished in Ashkenazic communities as well. The models and stimuli for these circles abounded: they were structured similarly to professional guilds in the non-Jewish world or to the confraternities that abounded in counter-Reformation Italy.[64] Like the communities they served, *ḥevrot* in the early modern period in Europe often had a foundation document which stated their purpose and contained the rules of the society. Sometimes these were prepared in consultation with a local rabbi or they were adapted from the regulations of other *ḥevrot*.

Membership in *ḥevrot*, as in certain guilds, often carried social prestige. The most ubiquitous example was the *ḥevra' kadisha' gomele hasadim* ("holy benevolent society"), whose task it was to prepare the dead for burial. Preparation for burial was the ultimate act of human kindness, as no recompense could be expected from the recipient. Only the most mature and upstanding community members could join this society, and they were treated with reverence because of their sacred work. Some *ḥevrot*

[62] Guggenheim, "Jewish Community," 87; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm*, 274–85; Avigdor Farine, "Charity and Study Societies in Europe of the 16th–18th Centuries," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 64 (1973), 17, assumed erroneously that a *ḥevra kadisha* "must have existed in all Jewish communities at a very early time." See, e.g., a responsum from fourteenth-century Spain (Daroca) in which a man is described as "washing all the dead of the community *as an act of kindness* (*derekh gemilut hasadim*)": cited from Responsa R. Yom Tov Ishbili (Ritva) #159. See, further, Bonfil, "Ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit be-Italia be-Tekufat ha-Renaissance," 209.

[63] Bonfil, "Ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit be-Italia," argues that sometimes *ḥevrot* preceded and laid the groundwork for Jewish communities in formation. According to Farine, "Charity and Study Societies," 33, this was true in Padua, Breslau, Kiev, and Vilna, and other Jewish communities.

[64] Farine, "Charity and Study Societies," 32.

specialized in caring for the sick, dowering poor brides, or channeling funds to the Holy Land. In Bohemia and Moravia, as well as in Poland–Lithuania, Jews sometimes organized separate merchant and craft guilds modeled upon the Christian guilds.[65]

In some cases, communities directly oversaw the *ḥevrot*, as activities of the *ḥevra* were duly recorded in the communal *pinkas*, while in others, *ḥevrot* either were sufficiently unofficial not to have separate records (i.e., some small rural communities), or kept them completely separate, rarely making an impression in communal records.

Ḥevrot provided an alternative source for a sense of communal belonging and political honor for Jews who did not serve within the leadership elite. They provided a space for acting out class and status within the larger community. They distributed titles to their functionaries that conferred (sometimes exaggerated) political titles of honor, and held induction ceremonies or annual dinners filled with pomp and circumstance. Many had governance structures that closely paralleled those of the main communal institutions, including voting, secret ballots, and the timing of the vote. In Vilna, for example, the vote for membership in the *ḥevra kadisha* took place just after the vote for communal positions, to allow for distribution of positions to those who were not elected to the top rank. Some *ḥevrot* enforced their will or that of the community with strict discipline, so that they became part of the enforcement mechanism for the community. By refusing to prepare for burial anyone who was deemed to have violated their or communal rules, the *ḥevra' kadisha'* stepped into the role of a communal authority.

The average amount distributed to the poor was so small that many charitable societies flourished more to serve the needs of the members than to satisfy the needs of the poor. This was particularly true when several groups of different origin settled in one city, a common pattern in early modern communities. The Jewish community in seventeenth-century Rome contained some thirty active *ḥevrot*, while other Italian cities had fifteen to twenty each.[66] In Prague, for example, there were three status ranks for members of *ḥevrot* in the late seventeenth century: elders, signers, and *ofgenummene* ("novices"). Every new member went through a period of novitiate, lasting between two and four years. During the trial period, they had no vote in running the *ḥevra*. In some communities, the last year of the novitiate was a transition year, in which the member voted but could not be elected. In some cases, such as charitable *ḥevrot*, dues were collected

[65] Ela Bauer, "Guilds," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven, 2008).
[66] Farine, "Charity and Study Societies," 29. In Rome, the average membership was twenty people in a *ḥevra*.

from members and penalties for nonpayment could be severe. Some *ḥevrot* combined several functions, such as channeling charity collections within the community as well as to the Holy Land; or two *ḥevrot* might act in concert – for example, when a prayer or study *ḥevra* would hold a vigil near the bed of a dead person.

The larger a Jewish community, the more elaborate its *ḥevra* structure and the greater the prestige of its directors and members. Some *ḥevrot* printed their regulations and lists of members. Different types of *ḥevrot* often had varying levels of honor associated with serving in them. *Ḥevrot gemilut hasadim* were often the most exclusive and expensive to join, while *ḥevrot* for study or synagogue activities were less so. Some *ḥevrot* were founded by and remained under the exclusive control of a few families; they accepted very few new members and did so at a very high premium.[67]

Although male children could be admitted to *ḥevrot* and were often registered at their circumcision (although not admitted to full meaningful participatory membership until much later), women were rarely full members of *ḥevrot*.[68] They tended to be adjunct members in sick and burial societies but did not play any role in the management of the *ḥevra*; they just fulfilled the relevant duties toward other women. Despite not having a say in the formal running of the *ḥevra*, the women's circles provided women with an organizational framework and social interaction that they would not have otherwise had. In Vilna, the *ḥevra' kadisha'* was formally divided into three sub-*ḥevrot*: a major association, a minor association, and a women's *ḥevra*.[69] In Altona, the *kahal* made specific legislation to assert its control and ownership of a women's charitable *ḥevra* to assist poor brides.[70]

Some women's *ḥevrot* allowed women a measure of agency. Litt notes an exceptional case of officers being *elected* to lead a women's *ḥevra* as *parnasot* (he does not provide the original Hebrew term, only the English "governors") of the *ḥevrat gemilut hasadim ve-takhrikhim* ("*ḥevra* for good deeds and sewing shrouds").[71] Women contributed money to *ḥevrot* so that continuous prayer would be offered for their souls after their deaths.[72] *Ḥevrot* whose purpose was the upkeep of the communal *mikveh* ("ritual bath") would have utilized a female attendant, while women would have

[67] Ibid., 22. At n. 10, see an excerpt from a *pinkas ḥevra* in which the members "sageru hapinkas," closed the books so that no new members would be admitted for a period of several years. Moses A. Shulvass, "The First Pinkas Hevra in Reggio," *Reshumot* 4 (1947), 98–130.

[68] Farine, "Charity and Study Societies," 27. [69] Ibid., 169.

[70] Jerusalem, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, ms AHW # 10, fol. 16a, para. 77.

[71] Litt, *Pinkas*, from the Hague *pinkas* in 1749.

[72] Farine, "Charity and Study Societies," 25.

been involved in the work of *ḥevrot* whose primary purpose was the support of indigent women, such as societies to dower orphans and help young women in need, even in cases where the membership roster was all male.[73] Avraham Ya'ari published a remarkable document from the early eighteenth century in which women in the Holy Land implore women in western European *kehillot* to form women's *ḥevrot* that would direct their charitable donations only to women's causes.[74] Just as *ḥevrot* were among the aspects of *kehillah* life that likely predated the formation of communal governance structures, they also outlived those structures. Long after the demise of the *kehillah*, voluntary societies flourished.

No single template served *kehillot* when it came to educating Jewish children and teens. Among Sephardic Jewish communities, elementary education included a broad range of subjects, religious and secular, and was conducted along pedagogically enhanced principles by the community. In Ashkenazic communities, Jewish education was more variable. In medieval times, the education of children among Ashkenazic Jews was the obligation of parents; by the early modern period in both German and Polish lands it had developed into a communal responsibility.[75] Some *kehillot* monitored the education of children, while others left the process largely up to the initiative of parents and concerned themselves communally only with orphans and children of the destitute. The age at which children began and ended formal instruction, class size, the training of teachers, curriculum and texts, forms of discipline, and responsibility and oversight for the system were culturally and locally determined and varied greatly from community to community, and sometimes within social classes in the same community.

Jews developed their own system of higher education on the basis of a classical rabbinic canon.[76] With few exceptions, these institutions were supported by the head of the academy who also served as the rabbi of the community or, in the Sephardic world, by a wealthy patron of scholarship. In either case, it was not until the modern period that the costs of educating

[73] Benjamin Hirsch Auerbach, *Geschichte der israelitischen Gemeinde Halberstadt* (Halberstadt, 1866), 30: "Verein zur Ausstattung unbemittelter Mädchen" was the German Jewish equivalent of the Sephardic "dotar" societies for dowering poor or orphan brides.

[74] Avraham Ya'ari, "Shene Kunteresim me-'Eretz Yisra'el," *Kiryat sefer* 23 (1946/7), 140–59.

[75] Elhanan Reiner, "The Yeshivas of Poland and Ashkenaz during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Israel Bartal, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Chava Turniansky, eds., *Ke-minhag Ashkenaz u-Folin Sefer Yovel le-Khone Shmeruk* (Jerusalem, 1993).

[76] Talya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Philadelphia, 2011); Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1992).

future scholars, rabbis, and religious judges became the province and financial responsibility of the community.

Communities owned or leased land for their purposes and were responsible for the building of various structures for the use of community members. These ranged from the absolute necessities for maintaining religious life, to centers for recreation that only larger communities could sustain.

The foremost concern of a nascent community was securing land for burial. Cemetery rights were often granted to Jews in the founding charters of their settlement, by the parties who stood to gain financially from their presence (sometimes at the expense of the local peasants whose customary grazing land would be diminished as a result). Small and rural communities often depended on a larger community in the region for burial arrangements.[77] Cemeteries were far more than places to keep the dead within one religious community. A cemetery tied the community to a particular piece of land over time, and for many Jews created the sense of sacred space. Even in its most mundane aspect, the cemetery functioned as an extension of the community in displaying honor and class. Position of family plots and elaborate designs on headstones bespoke wealth and prestige, designations of priestly descent, martyrological status, scholarly standing, and virtues like piety and modesty.[78] Exclusion from burial within the cemetery was one of the severest penalties the community could impose. The impulse not to abandon an ancestral burial place explains why some Jews returned to reside near the old quarters where they had been persecuted or expelled.

After a cemetery, Jewish communities needed a synagogue. While small rural communities might not have the resources for a separate synagogue building, those that could afford to would try to purchase or build a structure that would serve as a synagogue and as the social and religious center of the communal space. Medieval synagogues in the Christian world tended to be inconspicuous: Christians legislated against building them and against their having a more prominent appearance than the church. In the early modern period, as Jewish populations grew in some urban spaces, new developments in synagogue building emerged. These included a move away from informal buildings that were designed to blend into their

[77] Christophe Cluse, cited in Guggenheim, "Jewish Community," 79, found charters granting Jews one cemetery within a diocese comprising several Jewish communities. Such restrictions were not uncommon, and they fostered closer relations between the Jewish communities.

[78] Rachel Greenblatt, "The Shapes of Memory: Evidence in Stone from the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 47, 1(2002), 43–67; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm*, 289–90.

surroundings, to "great synagogues" in the Netherlands, Prague, and in Poland, whose purpose was to make a visible statement and bespoke Jewish confidence. (Some large synagogue buildings in frontier areas of Poland did double duty as fortresses and were designed to serve as places of prayer – and military defense.) Early modern synagogues were commissioned by Jewish communities but designed and built by Christian architects and builders. A noteworthy aspect of almost all new synagogue structures in the Ashkenazic world, east as well as west, was the integration into the synagogue design, and expansion, of the *ezrat nashim*, the women's section of the synagogue. In medieval synagogues, these were often completely separate rooms, perhaps with a small connecting window or opening. In early modern synagogues, the women's gallery or section was a sizable space that figured into the initial planning. This reflected the larger populations in some communities, but also the growing sense that women were part of the community and needed space within the synagogue to worship, and as a social space.[79]

Larger urban communities could support many additional religious and social structures, including a *mikveh*. These ritual baths were sometimes owned and maintained (and controlled) by the community, in other cases privately owned, and in some places could be a natural body of water such as a river. Depending on location, while ritual bathing was essential to the ritual obligations of married women, the community itself would not necessarily have to build and maintain a *mikveh*.[80]

Other structures maintained by some larger communities included a dance hall for weddings, an infirmary for the sick, and a guesthouse for travelers. These institutions required employees to run and maintain them: cantors and sextons for the synagogue, scribes to record community business, teachers in schools, kosher food producers and ritual slaughterers, butchers and bakers, as large communities took responsibility for the supply and supervision of kosher food.

Class distinctions cut to the core of communal identity, since one of the first duties of the communal body was to regulate its membership according to means. The heavy burdens of taxation required a community to be vigilant against the entry of too many Jews who could not sustain themselves. Itinerant beggars were resented by non-Jewish authorities as well, and so they presented a threat to the very existence/ toleration of the Jewish community. Some cities with Jewish communities were situated along

[79] Barry Stiefel, "The Architectural Origins of the Great Early Modern Urban Synagogue," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 56 (2011), 105–34; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm*, 218–36.

[80] On *mikva'ot* and their upkeep, see Georg Heuberger, ed., *Mikwe: Geschichte und Architektur jüdischer Ritualbäder in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992); Kaplan, "To Immerse their Wives."

routes well traveled by itinerant Jewish beggars and thus felt the problem more acutely than other locales.[81] Wandering beggars could easily be sent away with small sums, but the local poor presented a more intractable problem. Residents of the community who were established members but had nevertheless fallen on hard times were the highest priority. Some communities distributed supplies or scrip to redeem food and basic necessities. Charity funds were used to aid other Jewish communities in times of disaster and sometimes just to extend assistance for a project such as building a synagogue.[82]

Eretz Israel funds, sometimes created under the influence of visiting emissaries, helped maintain ties between Diaspora communities and those in the Holy Land. The emissaries circulated between distant Jewish communities and often served as vital conduits of information, contributing a sense of transcommunal solidarity.[83] The position of *gabbai*, the treasurer of the fund, was an honor tied to other communal functions.

Between the abject poor and the self-sufficient lay the realm of service. Young men and women whose families could not train or support them were often sent to work as domestic servants or as apprentices in the homes of other Jews. Most households of even modest means employed servants and their lives within the community have yet to be properly studied.[84]

INTERETHNIC/MULTI-ETHNIC RELATIONS

Although early modern Jewry was not riven by ethnic politics, communities of Jews who migrated in clusters presented a new configuration in the early modern period. Rather than each community being contiguous with one city, clusters of Jews from various regions ended up living in close proximity to one another and formed new communities. Their representatives tried to negotiate a very delicate and sometimes frayed balance.

[81] Litt, *Pinkas*, 109, cites the example of the Friesland assembly which recorded two decrees against Jewish beggars (1757, 1766). Both texts were included in the *pinkas*, apparently to repel any objections to the harsh policies by showing that they were imposed by non-Jews.

[82] Ibid., 98.

[83] Matthias Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, 2014).

[84] On maidservants in Jewish communities, see Tamar Shimshi-Licht, "Meshartim u-Meshartot Yehudi'im be-Germanya be-Reshit ha-Et ha-Hadasha" (Ph.D. diss., Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Be'er sheva, 2006); Elisheva Carlebach, "Fallen Women and Fatherless Children: Jewish Domestic Servants in Eighteenth-Century Altona," *Jewish History* 24 (2010), 295–308. In The Hague in the eighteenth century, Ashkenazic girls served in Sephardic households: Litt, *Pinkas*, 100.

While in some cases the divide was simple, Ashkenazic vs. Sephardic, these groupings themselves often encompassed several subgroups.[85]

Depending on the size of each cluster, they often had no choice but to cooperate, while at times each insisted on its autonomy. Conflict often erupted over claims to priority: an existing community saw the newcomers as outsiders or even as interlopers who ought to be governed by the customs and regulations in place. By the reverse token, when the fortunes of the original dwellers dwindled to the point where the community could not be sustained, the newcomers provided welcome relief.

One of the most enduring myths about Jewish life in pre-modern times is that Jews respected the exclusive jurisdiction of Jewish courts over cases between a Jewish plaintiff and a Jewish defendant.[86] While it is true that Jewish authorities generally attempted to strengthen the community's claim to exclusive jurisdiction, often by invoking the ban and/or social ostracism, as well as by labeling the transgressor a *moser* ("traitor") or *malshin* ("informer"), it is equally true that Jews often sought justice, even in cases involving only fellow Jews, in non-Jewish courts. Jewish communities were rarely able to maintain an absolutely exclusive hold on cases between Jews. The tangled history of Jewish judicial practices with regard to jurisdiction in the medieval and early modern period has yet to be written. Recent research, particularly archival research in places where Jews resided, demonstrates that the principle of autonomy granted to Jews to live according to their own laws was balanced against the interests of states and rulers in retaining control over Jewish affairs, as well as the interests of Jewish parties who might be better served by non-Jewish courts.[87] Communal autonomy did not necessarily coincide with judicial autonomy, such that a pattern of legal pluralism operated far more extensively than scholars previously believed. This is not to maintain that Jews did not live within a coherent and distinct communal and religious structure, just that judicially they were far more integrated into the prevailing system than has previously been thought.

[85] Bernard Dov Cooperman, "Ethnicity and Institution Building among Jews in Early Modern Rome," *AJS Review* 30 (2006), 119–45; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm*, 164–9; Jane Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez 1450–1700: Studies in Communal and Economic Life* (Leiden, 1980).

[86] See the classical formulation in Joseph Karo, *Shulhan Arukh: Ḥoshen Mishpat* 26:1.

[87] This was particularly the case for Jews in Muslim lands. See Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 25–60, 120–46, 174–204. Najwa Al-Qattan, "Dhimmis in the Muslim Court: Legal Autonomy and Religious Discrimination," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999), 429, defines judicial autonomy as "the right to litigate most of their legal affairs in officially recognized and communally organized and operated dhimmi courts."

The reasons for Jewish preference for non-Jewish courts varied. It was not simply a matter of shopping venues in search of the best verdict. In many places the court system may not have appeared to Jews as particularly Muslim or Christian, but simply as the court of the land where civil matters could be adjudicated. (Talmudic law distinguished between evidentiary and constitutive functions of a legal transaction, the former permitted in a non-Jewish court, the latter prohibited.) Jewish communities often had no standing court with trained judges; any three knowledgeable laymen could serve. While such an ad hoc court could issue a ruling to resolve a dispute, it could not maintain the type of permanent record that a judicial bureaucracy would issue as a matter of course. Jewish courts often deliberately invoked the ruling authority to strengthen their own hand. They had far less power to enforce their rulings, so that parties to a dispute may have sought a venue that could better enforce its decision.

Jewish presence in non-Jewish courts is well attested throughout the medieval and early modern periods. In the Muslim world, almost from its inception, non-Muslims of *dhimmi* status, both Jews and Christians, regularly brought cases before Islamic courts, and not only in cases where one party was a Muslim. From some Genizah documents, it seems as though these were the preferred venue. In the Ottoman Empire, the recourse of Jews to the *shariah* courts for every type of case, including those involving personal status, has defied historians' attempts at a coherent explanation.[88]

In Christian Europe, the picture was equally complicated. Andreas Gotzmann has been one of the leading proponents of a fundamental revision of the image of judicial autonomy which has been a cornerstone of Jewish historiography.[89] No area within Europe saw a complete division between Jews and the non-Jewish legal system. Jews were at home in non-Jewish courts and sometimes resorted to them to litigate against other Jews.[90]

[88] Joseph Hacker, "Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire – Its Scope and Limits: Jewish Courts from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in Avigdor Levy, ed., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, 1994), 153–202. For the later Ottoman period from the second half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, see Al-Qattan, "Dhimmis in the Muslim Court," 429–44. Al-Qattan, 433–5, argues that the dowry and inheritance laws made *shariah* courts particularly attractive to Jewish and Christian women. *Shariah* courts had a form of divorce/annulment instigated by women. See also Al-Qattan, 443 n. 37: "The Jewish authorities sometimes made concessions in the application of Jewish law (by conceding some share of the inheritance to daughters, for example) in order to forestall recourse to the Muslim court."

[89] Andreas Gotzmann, "At Home in Many Worlds? Thoughts about New Concepts in Jewish Legal History," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 11 (2003), 424–36.

[90] *Takkanot* from fourteenth-century Crete warned Jews not to violate the sanctity of the Sabbath and holidays by turning to the courts on the eve of those days, "whether Jewish or non-Jewish courts": Hartom and Cassuto, eds., *Takkanot Kandi'ah*, 9, # 17.

Moreover, the systems of Christian law influenced the structure and content of Jewish law in ways that scholars have been slow to recognize.

Jewish authorities understood the threat to the viability of their judicial system and community posed by the resort of Jews to courts beyond the community, and they struggled to uphold the principle of judicial autonomy for Jewish courts. Yet even the most powerful community could not completely control the judicial choices of its members.

Rather than seeing Jews as operating an independent judicial system alongside other systems, scholars have now come to a consensus that, in many times and places, judicial (or legal) pluralism better describes the state of affairs than the term "autonomy." Prevailing norms in non-Jewish courts may have exercised strong and unwritten influence on Jewish judges who acted to prevent the need for recourse to non-Jewish courts.[91]

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

While the degree of judicial autonomy enjoyed by Jewish communities during the medieval and early modern periods is now the subject of debate and revision, there is no question about the eighteenth century. In both eastern and western Europe, it was characterized by the intensification of the process of integration of Jewish judicial structures into the non-Jewish, and of breakdown of earlier patterns of internal discipline.[92] States saw the exercise of autonomy by corporate entities as an impediment to their power and bureaucracy. In some instances, they restricted the jurisdiction of Jewish courts exclusively to cases involving ritual law.[93] In others, governmental fiat simply pronounced the end of various aspects of autonomy.[94] Jews were encouraged to bring their cases to non-Jewish courts and they did so with increasing frequency. Rabbinical courts integrated non-Jewish legal terminology into their work and sometimes adjusted their rulings to remain competitive.[95]

Rabbinic courts continued to function but more as voluntary venues for arbitrating disputes. They could no longer impose the ban and had no means of enforcement other than resorting to the local council. Yet the external pressure often coincided with internal implosion of civil Jewish authority. Prussia has often been cited as a model of the top-down dissolution of Jewish autonomy by an autocratic state. Recent

[91] See, e.g., Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 204.
[92] David H. Horowitz, "Fractures and Fissures in Jewish Communal Autonomy, 1710–1782" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2010), 237–43; Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 99–118.
[93] Horowitz, "Fractures and Fissures," 1, on Prussia and its laws of 1750.
[94] This is true for the *Va'ad 'arba' 'aratzot* in Poland, for example.
[95] Berkovitz, *Protocols*.

work, however, points to the internal erosion of Jewish authority even before the state's formal intervention, from the 1760s.[96] Evidence from internal Jewish sources documents the growing process of interpenetration of cultural, judicial, and social norms from the majority community into Jewish societies. In some places, Jewish leaders began to refer to themselves in terms used to refer to the non-Jewish parallel bodies.[97]

While non-Jewish governments intervened directly in "internal" Jewish affairs with greater frequency, such intervention was sometimes the result of paralyzing disputes or discord within the Jewish community.[98] In some cases, non-Jewish governmental authorities appointed, or at least ratified, officials of the Jewish community.[99] In several instances, non-Jewish governmental officials requested that Jews prepare a translation of their laws and or local statutes so that the judges could familiarize themselves with them.[100]

A further sign of the stresses of the eighteenth century on the boundaries of communal authority is the blurring of lines between rabbinic and lay functions. Lay councils increasingly performed religious duties that were formerly the province of rabbis, or insisted on maintaining control over personal status matters.[101] In some communities, the *pinkasim* reflect a gradual abandonment of the political functions of the *kahal* and a retreat to a narrower focus on ritual and synagogue functions. This tendency reaches its apex and brings the communal legislation full circle when some *parnasim* begin to abandon civil sanctions and reinscribe halakhic terminology and reasoning into their efforts to increase the social control of community members. They depict infractions against their communal authority as

[96] Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family and Crisis, 1770–1830* (Oxford, 1994).

[97] Litt, *Pinkas*, 35. In The Hague, Jewish elected leadership refers to itself as "*regirung*" rather than the customary "*kahal*."

[98] Examples: Ibid., 36, and n. 12 there; Horowitz, "Fractures and Fissures," 72–118; Lois Dubin, "Jewish Women, Marriage Law, and Emancipation: A Civil Divorce in Late-Eighteenth-Century Trieste," *Jewish Social Studies* (n.s.) 13 (2007), 65–92.

[99] Litt, *Pinkas*, 44, cites the case of increasing encroachment of non-Jewish municipal authorities in Middelburg. The last entry in that *pinkas* is telling: "Election of the *parnasim* by the authorities, may they be exalted": ibid., 46.

[100] On Dutch translation in Middelburg: ibid., 44; on the translation prepared by R. Jonathan Eybeschuetz for the city of Metz, see Jordan Katz, "'To Judge and to be Judged:' Jewish Communal Autonomy in Metz and the Struggle for Sovereignty in Eighteenth-Century France," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 104 (2014), 452–6; and for the German translation by R. Hershel Levin for the Prussian government, see David Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 1996), 105.

[101] See the cases described in Litt, *Pinkas*, 101, 85–6.

violations of Halakhah.[102] Stefan Litt argues that *parnasim* began to use halakhic reasoning to rein in deviants when communal law began to lose its force.[103] This argument merits further exploration. It may be that we are seeing the closing of a circle – whereas the earliest communal leaders struggled to find halakhic legitimation for their ordinances, Jewish communities in some parts of Europe later became confident in their powers, with often no conscious separation between the civil and religious spheres in the administration of justice within the *kehillot*. As centralizing states and strong municipal governments began to see the Jewish community (along with other corporate entities) as a threat to the consolidation of their power, they began to distinguish more sharply between the religious-ritual functions of the Jewish community, which it could continue to administer, and the civil functions, which the state began to claim as its own. This left rabbis with their religious function, but it began to strip the civil adjudication function from Jewish lay leadership.

Another symptom of the alienation of Jewish lay leaders from political power is the phenomenon of refusal of service. In eighteenth-century records, elected officials repeatedly refused to accept the responsibility of their communal offices, causing disruption in the smooth functioning of *kehillot*. Communities imposed stiff fines for rejecting the positions; this does not seem to have stemmed the trend.[104]

The "autonomous Jewish community" in early modern western Europe was never fully autonomous, nor did it serve Jewish purposes exclusively, and by the eighteenth century, the sense of community was unraveling as well. Jewish communities were complex and dynamic, different in every locale, yet sharing certain features. Set into their larger context as organic components of the states and societies in which they functioned, a fresh analysis of them can emerge.

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[102] Ibid., 73. [103] Ibid., 90. [104] Ibid., 42–51.

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PART II

THEMES AND TRENDS IN EARLY MODERN JEWISH LIFE

CHAPTER 7

IBERIA AND BEYOND
Judeoconversos *and the Iberian Inquisitions*

DAVID GRAIZBORD

In the year 1390, the Jews of the kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, and Navarre comprised the largest and most economically prosperous Jewish population of late medieval Europe. By the end of 1415, after waves of conversionist assaults, that population had suffered a dramatic decline. (Relevant demographic data are scarce for the period, but the overall trends are clear from anecdotal and other evidence.) Meanwhile, the multitude of former Jews who had converted under duress, derisively called *conversos* ("converts"), *judeoconversos* ("Judeo-converts"), and *cristianos nuevos* ("New Christians"), struggled to cope with the social stigma that "Old Christians" (*cristianos viejos* – namely, Ibero-Christians of reputedly non-Jewish and non-Muslim ancestry) attached to their Jewish roots. As is well known, the "Catholic Monarchs" of Castile and Aragon drove out the unconverted Jewish population from their domains in 1492. Then, in 1496–7, virtually the entire Jewish community of Portugal was baptized by royal decree. The outcome was yet another population of *judeoconversos*: the Lusitanian *cristãos-novos*. A few months later, in 1498, the last openly professing, native Jews of the Iberian Peninsula were expelled from Navarran soil. Open or "officially" Jewish life in the Iberian Peninsula had come to an end. Not so Iberian Judeophobia, which entered a new phase in its history, and would be directed primarily at the former Jews and their Christianized descendants.

The emergence of the *judeoconverso* phenomenon over the period from the first mass conversion of 1391 to that of 1497 meant that the persecuting Ibero-Christian societies had to contend with a striking irony of their success: a majority of yesterday's despised Jews were today's unacculturated brothers- and sisters-in-Christ. Given the forced nature of the mass conversions and the anti-Jewish bigotry that had compelled them, it is not surprising that, in the course of the fifteenth century, Old Christians began to use the appellations "New Christian," "Judeo-convert," "convert," and similar terms, to tar not only former Jews but also their baptized descendants with the stigma of religious inauthenticity stemming from a supposedly inborn Jewishness. (For better or worse, scholars still employ these designations to

refer to the converts and the descendants alike. We will use the terms in that inclusive sense here.) A tension between the impulse to assimilate the *judeoconversos*, and the strong urge to repulse them as congenital "Jews," is evident in this sociolinguistic development.

Primary evidence of this tension comes from the archives of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions. Established between 1478 and 1536, and spreading to far corners of the Iberian overseas empires, these institutions were principal tools for the persecution of supposed "Judaizers" (crypto-Jews) among the converts and their descendants well into the eighteenth century. As main articulators and propagators of Ibero-Catholic notions of "Judaism," and as quasi-ethnographic recorders, interpreters, and fabricators of extensive testimony that New Christians rendered over three centuries, the Inquisitions still serve as one of the few lenses through which one may view the early modern history of that social group, and of the animus to which its members were subjected. Indeed, an analysis of inquisitorial persecution and of the sociocultural environment that gave rise to it allows a reconstruction of the ways in which *judeoconversos* negotiated the opposing forces of Judeophobic absorption and repulsion to create complex social and religious identities. This chapter will briefly undertake such an analysis, selectively tracing the history of *judeoconversos* in Iberia and beyond, from the mass conversions of 1391 to the last peak of inquisitorial action against them in the opening decades of the 1700s.

JEWS AND NEW CHRISTIANS FROM 1391 TO 1492: PROBLEMS OF THEIR SOCIAL SEPARATION AND CONFLATION

Inspired by mendicant friars, clerics, and occasionally supported by the papacy and the Iberian crowns, the attacks on Hispano-Jewish communities of 1391–1415 left many divided families and a confusing cultural landscape in their wake. Jews who converted to Christianity had little choice but to participate in the social and devotional life of their new coreligionists. Yet, in many cases, the converts continued to socialize with unconverted family members, to live in close proximity to them, and sometimes to contribute materially to Jewish communal institutions – at least so the New Christians' detractors alleged. Not surprisingly, the specter of fraternization between Judeo-converts and Jews motivated several attempts by lay and ecclesiastical authorities to prevent contact between the two groups.

At the same time, the questions of who and what "a Jew" was took center stage in both the Ibero-Jewish and Ibero-Christian camps. Rabbinic law was clear on the subject of Jewish identity; so, too, was canon law on what determined a person's status as a Christian. Yet doubts remained at the level

of lived experience. For instance, the circumstances of divided families forced Iberian rabbis to consider how Jews should approach the converts and their progeny. Ought Jews to treat New Christians, who in many cases were technically "Israel[ites]" according to rabbinic law, as despicable *meshummadim* ("apostates") or as innocent *anusim* ("coerced or violated ones")? Even when the forced nature of the conversions was not in question, misgivings remained. As Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemach Durán (1361–1444) of Mallorca lamented, "Who can say who among the *anusim* is in reality *kasher* ["fit," i.e., a true Jew], and who is *passul* ["blemished," i.e., a genuine turncoat]?"[1] Evidence from difficult legal cases reveals a variety of rabbinic responses to this and related questions. Some jurists combined exculpatory and condemnatory attitudes toward New Christian subjects.[2] Other halakhists shifted from the former to the latter posture as the perception became entrenched that latter-generation *judeoconversos* were earnest Christians.[3] Additional evidence sheds light on ambiguity within Ibero-Jewish communities concerning the New Christians. Many Jews, for instance, maintained close social intercourse with converts and with the latter's descendants until the last decade of the fifteenth century. Nonetheless, after 1391, Jewish letters of introduction made a point of distancing their subjects from the taint of apostasy by including such laudatory epithets as "of a family of believers" or "of good parentage." This rhetorical tactic was part of a larger phenomenon whereby Jews responded to the blurring of social and religious boundaries by heightening the factor of genealogy as a marker of their identity.[4]

For their part, Old Christians struggled with the questions of how to identify, classify, and either integrate or segregate fellow Christians who not long ago had been infidels, or were the immediate descendants of infidels. Implicit in such questions was a lingering fear of contamination by a culturally alien population. Especially alarming to Old Christians was the fact that Jews and the converts were not immediately recognizable as separate groups. Juan I of Aragon took some of the earliest steps to address this issue. In 1393, he decreed that Jews in his kingdom would henceforth be strictly segregated from the New Christian cohort and forced to wear hats and badges more distinctive than the ones they had previously been obligated to display.[5] Nearly a century later, in 1480, the parliaments of Castile introduced the last and most thorough in a long series of similar

[1] Quoted in Benzion Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain from the Late 14th to the Early 16th Century, According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources,* 3rd edn. (Ithaca, 1999), 36.
[2] Ibid., 5–32. [3] See, for example, ibid., 47–50.
[4] David Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain," *Past and Present* 174, 1 (2002), 3–41.
[5] Ibid., 10.

measures that had been adopted in various corners of the Hispanic kingdoms.[6]

Fueling worries about cultural pollution were suspicions that many of the Christians of Jewish ancestry were secretly "Judaizing" – that is, observing and cultivating what the church called "Judaism." It is plausible that some *judeoconversos* of the early post-1391 generations were indeed doing this. It is also likely that many *cristianos nuevos* merely retained a number of habits that marked them apart from Old Christians. In any event, suspicions focused mostly on religiously innocuous practices. Several of the latter were merely ethnological in nature – for example, the avoidance of pork as distasteful rather than as a matter of ritual purity. A few bore little or no relation to rabbinic Judaism. Canon law did not prohibit most of the cultural tokens at issue, much less propose that Christian identity and piety were contingent on their avoidance. Neither did rabbinic law treat the customs as constitutive or as conveyors of Jewishness. Nonetheless, wary Old Christians approached such customs as bleeding meat to prepare it for consumption as suspect precisely because most of the acts were domestic, and thus out of public view. In typically didactic fashion, the Iberian Inquisitions constructed a relatively fixed protocol itemizing the targeted "rituals," and made them widely known, through proclamations called Edicts of Faith (on this subject, see below). By the 1500s, Old Christians had learned to denounce a wide array of merely unconventional behaviors as though these behaviors were solid evidence of religious deviance. An inquisitorial apologist summarized the official rationale for this catch-all approach when he wrote, "It is an external sign of heresy when an action or word does not accord with the common practice of a Catholic people."[7]

In the fifteenth century, a few clerics such as Cardinal Juan de Torquemada (1388–1468) advocated the patient and methodical catechization of *judeoconversos*. In particular, he chastised those among his fellow Christians who would impugn the converts and thus block their metaphorical path to the Promised Land of full-fledged Christianity.[8] Other polemicists were far less charitable to the neophytes and their descendants. For instance, the anonymous author of *The Book of the Alborayque* (Castile, late fifteenth century) characterized *anusim* as generically indefinite

[6] Joseph Pérez, *History of a Tragedy: The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, trans. Lysa Hochroth (Urbana, 2007), 74–5.

[7] Francisco Peña (1587), quoted in Henry Kamen, "Toleration and Dissent in Sixteenth-Century Spain: The Alternative Tradition," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19 (1988), 3–23.

[8] Thomas M. Izbicki, "Juan de Torquemada's Defense of the *Conversos*," *Catholic Historical Review* 85, 2 (1999), 195–207.

monsters and consummate hypocrites. Specifically, the author assailed them as "dog-men" (*hombres perros*) prone to return to the vomit of "the Sabbath and circumcision," who nonetheless falsely identified themselves as "Jews" or as "Christians" depending on what was convenient for them in their immediate circumstances. The point was that *anusim* were utterly faithless and depraved – "Neither Jews nor Christians, nor even Moors," and neither men nor women but "sodomites."[9] Alonso de Espina (d. 1469), a Franciscan preacher, exceeded such vituperation in his *Fortress of the Faith* (*Fortalitium Fidei, c*. 1460) by transferring to the New Christians virtually the entire array of medieval anti-Jewish canards.[10]

Espina's diatribe is but one indication that anti-*converso* animosity in the 1400s was increasingly founded on the notion that New Christians comprised a bloc of essentially "Jewish" character and blood. This outlook was first given legal expression in Toledo, where a popular revolt against the fiscal and political authority of Juan II of Castile brought with it violent attacks upon the city's *judeoconverso* and Jewish contingents in 1449. The insurgent government established in the city promptly issued a "Sentence-Statute" that excluded *judeoconversos* from all municipal posts, barred them from the performance of public scribal functions, and invalidated their legal testimony against Old Christians. The text of the decree brands Jews and New Christians "enemies of the faith," and blames them for engaging in a campaign of deceit, plunder, and murder. The decree also repeats an old myth that Jews had surrendered the city to Muslim infidels in 711 CE, adding that *judeoconversos* had similarly seized municipal power as part of an attempt to dominate and otherwise undermine the city's Old Christian population.[11] Although it was condemned by the Castilian monarchy and the Church at the time, Toledo's historic measure was a precedent for "statutes of cleanness [or purity] of blood" that various Iberian organizations, from municipalities, to universities, to artisanal guilds and confraternities, to cathedral chapters,to religious and military orders, and others, formulated in the decades that followed, for the specific purpose of keeping persons of Jewish ancestry out of their ranks – often with the acquiescence

[9] Dwayne E. Carpenter, ed., *Text and Concordance of the Tratado del Alborayque*, Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid MS 17567 (microfiche) (Madison, 1993). See also David M. Gitlitz, "Hybrid *Conversos* in the *Libro Llamado el Alboraique*," *Hispanic Review* 60 (1992), 1–17.

[10] On this work, see Alisa Meyuhas Ginio, ed., *De bello iudaeorum: Fray Alonso de Espina y su fortalitium fidei* (Salamanca, 1998).

[11] The statute is transcribed in Eloy Benito Ruano, *Toledo en el siglo XV: vida política* (Madrid, 1961), 194.

or active approval of monarchs, prelates, and popes.[12] During a time of general political and economic turmoil in the Crown of Castile, anti-*converso* rioting compounded such stigmatization, and spread from the 1460s (in Carmona, Toledo, Seville, Burgos) into the mid-1470s (in Sepúlveda, Córdoba, Montoro, Carmona, Segovia, Valladolid, and elsewhere).[13] A shift from religious anti-Judaism to an ethnic hatred expressed in the language of race and supported by intermittent violence was evident in these developments. Still, a focus on (supposed) religious difference – specifically, on the alleged religious proclivities of *judeoconversos* – did not vanish with the turn to the new, blood-centered form of animosity, and would later fuel the Iberian Inquisitions. So, too, economic and political grievances would continue to coalesce with ethnic and religious hatreds in the minds of anti-*converso* persecutors.

Political rivalry and religious animus aside, was there any truth to the claim that Jews and *judeoconversos* were in fact one people, united by bonds of religion and destiny? On one hand, it is clear that from 1391 to 1415, and even until the Spanish expulsions of 1492–8, the Jewish and *judeoconverso* populations of Spain were socially intertwined and stood apart from the Old Christian majority in significant ways. We have already noted, for example, that Jews and New Christians often lived in the same neighborhoods.[14] Toledo's mixed Barrio de la Magdalena, which rioters burned and looted during the revolt of 1449, is a case in point. We have also mentioned that familial kinship linked Jewish and New Christian families uncomfortably, and that this is one reason that a "crisis of classification" (to borrow David Nirenberg's phrase) arose on both sides of the religious divide.[15] It is also the case that, after the mass conversions, New Christians remained "Jewish" in the eyes of the Old Christian majority because many of them assumed the economic and political roles that Jews had played in the urban life of the Iberian realms. Alonso de Cota and Juan de Ciudad, who were in charge of collecting royal taxes in Toledo on the eve of the 1449 revolt, and who were physically attacked by the insurgents, come to mind. (Cota's

[12] On the blood statutes, see, for example, Juan Hernández Franco, *Cultura y limpieza de sangre en la España moderna: puritate sanguinis* (Murcia, 1996); and Ruth Pike, *Linajudos and Conversos in Seville: Greed and Prejudice in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Spain* (New York, 2000).

[13] Gregory B. Kaplan, *The Evolution of Converso Literature: The Writings of the Converted Jews of Medieval Spain* (Gainesville, 2002), 26.

[14] On this subject, see, for instance, Haim Beinart, "The *Converso* Community in 16th- and 17th-century Spain," in R. D. Barnett, ed., *The Sephardi Heritage: Essays on the History and Cultural Contribution of the Jews of Spain and Portugal,* 2 vols. (London, 1971), I, 458.

[15] Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion," 10.

home was burned; he survived, but Ciudad was lynched and his body dragged through the city.) Notably, *conversos*' fiscal status often prevented their full integration with Old Christian society, since after the mass conversions various governments legally required that they shoulder some of the heavy financial obligations, including debts and special taxes, that they had carried as Jews.[16] Before the blood statutes became prevalent in the 1500s and 1600s, several New Christians became part of the clergy, entered religious orders, universities, lay professional fields, and assumed positions of secular power in various administrative capacities – though it is only sensible to be skeptical of the invidious claims of anti-*converso* polemicists that New Christians permeated the Church, the religious orders, the nobility, and the royal bureaucracy.[17] To mention but a few prominent cases, Diego Arias Dávila (d. 1466) was the royal treasurer of Castile under Enrique IV. His son, Juan Arias Dávila (*c.* 1430–97), was the bishop of Segovia and in that capacity administered a local inquisitorial tribunal and an investigation of the city's Jews that had been sparked by a blood libel. Diego's grandson, Pedro Arias Dávila (*c.* 1440–1531), led Castilian forces in the Spanish conquest of Orán (1509). He is chiefly remembered as the conqueror of the territories that became Panama and Nicaragua.[18] Once the blood statutes had proliferated, however, the vast majority of *conversos* were in a position similar to that in which virtually all Spanish Jews had found themselves up to the expulsions of 1492–8: New Christians were effectively locked out of the upper echelons of Castilian and Aragonese societies. Most of these *cristianos nuevos*, after all, lacked the material and political resources to acquire counterfeit certificates of genealogical "cleanness" or otherwise hold anti-*converso* detractors at bay.

On the other hand, the evident entanglement of the Jewish and New Christian groups is no proof of a common mentality. First, neither population was socio-economically monolithic. It is erroneous, for instance, to regard Iberian Jews and *conversos*, separately or together, as a capitalist bourgeoisie without serious qualification, as some scholars have.[19] In the Jewish case, the mass conversions of 1391–1415 decimated Jewish communities in several large and medium-sized cities. After that watershed, the focus of Jewish communal

[16] Ibid., 14.

[17] These claims were articulated in such works as *El libro verde de Aragón* (fifteenth century), recently published by Monique Combescure Thiry, ed. with intro. Miguel Angel Motis Dolader (Zaragoza, 2003).

[18] On the family, see, for example, David M. Gitlitz, *Los Arias Dávila de Segovia: entre la sinagoga y la Iglesia* (Bethesda, 1996).

[19] Generalizations of this sort occur, for example, in Julio Caro Baroja, *Los judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea*, 3rd edn., 3 vols. (Madrid, 1986), II, 19. Correctives to Caro's view include Pérez, *History of a Tragedy*, 58–68.

and cultural life shifted considerably, away from the economic hubs and toward small towns and villages.[20] New Christians, for their part, remained a mostly urban cohort, yet their ranks included not only the types of landless notables, government officials, and highly educated people typically found in cosmopolitan cities of early modern Europe; they also included manual laborers, seamstresses, servants, small artisans, petty merchants, and the like. Jaime Contreras has observed that the New Christian population of Spain may be regarded as part of a broad artisanal class.[21] Although extant demographic data are limited, it is clear that most New Christians did not participate in large-scale commerce and manufacturing, or in the mobilization and administration of major capital resources.

Second, neither Jews nor *judeoconversos* were religiously monolithic. Scholars of medieval Ibero-Jewry have amply documented that, beyond sharing a core Jewish identity, the members of Jewish elites varied significantly in their religious outlooks, from staunch fideism to rationalism, and from a highly speculative kabbalism to traditional talmudism. The Jewish rank-and-file is more difficult to characterize, both because of its large size relative to that of the articulate elites, and because ordinary Jews left behind relatively few documents that shed a direct light on their piety (or lack thereof). All the same, there is no reason to believe that the religiosities of those Jews were either exceptionally uniform or particularly disparate.[22]

For *judeoconversos* too, variety was the norm, especially in terms of the content of their religious identities. The Hispanist David Gitlitz has identified four major types and several subtypes of New Christians. Each type and subtype describes a cluster of religious, and hence social and political, attitudes and behaviors that fit within a much broader spectrum. The latter included subjects who: (1) identified with Christianity (from anti-Jewish "zealots," to "low-profile Christians"); (2) were religiously ambiguous (from "vacillators" to "syncretists"); (3) identified with Judaism (from staunch observers of Jewish customs, to persons whose "Judaism" was but a form of anti-Christianity); and (4) rejected religion altogether (i.e., religious "skeptics").[23] Also worth noting are signs that

[20] Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, trans. Louis Schoffman, with an introduction by Benjamin R. Gampel, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1992 [1959–61]), II, 244–9.

[21] Jaime Contreras, "Judíos, judaizantes y *conversos* en la peninsula ibérica en los tiempos de la expulsión," in Angel Alcalá, ed., *Judíos. Sefarditas. Conversos: La expulsión de 1492 y sus consecuencias* (Valladolid, 1995), 458.

[22] On religious and intellectual currents, see, for instance, Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, I, 243–305. See also Benjamin Gampel, "The Identity of Sephardim of Medieval Christian Iberia," *Jewish Social Studies* 8, 2–3 (2002), 133–8.

[23] David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia, 1996), 82–90. A devastating critique of that work, and of Gitlitz's approach to *conversos*

some *judeoconversos* may have understood themselves as members of a religious and social body distinct from the Jewish people. For instance, Inés of Herrera, an adolescent whose alleged messianic prophecies were the subject of an inquisitorial investigation from 1499 to 1502, was said to have envisioned her fellow *judeoconversos* occupying a heavenly place of honor separate from and superior to that of mere Jews.[24] Ines's was one of several eschatological outbursts that captivated ordinary New Christians in semi-rural areas around the turn of the century.

Taxonomies such as Gitlitz's are, of course, merely heuristic. To capture the texture and complexity of *judeoconversos*' individual and collective lives, empirical reconstructions must take into account specific temporal, ideological, psychological, and other factors, yet these aspects are typically lost in panoramic reviews. One aspect that deserves primary consideration is the political and cultural incoherence of late medieval and early modern Spain, and the resulting differences in conditions that obtained for *conversos* in Castile, Aragon, and Navarre, not to mention in diverse regions within those kingdoms and in Portugal. The present survey cannot do justice to those differences, or to their effects on the experiences of *cristianos nuevos*. Suffice it to note that, whatever their merits, attempts at sweeping portraits of "the religion" or "the social outlook," or the psychological and artistic "stamp" of "the" New Christians, remain vulnerable to the charge of speculativeness and oversimplification in what concerns highly intricate phenomena of identity. As Gretchen Starr-Lebeau has observed, what it meant to convert, or to be the descendant of a convert, was not nearly as obvious as many of the *judeoconversos*' contemporaries wished to believe.[25] One may well extend that caveat to modern academics.

Given the wide array of *judeoconverso* outlooks, it is not surprising that scholars of the Inquisition and of New Christians have never arrived at a consensus on a question that has fascinated several of them – namely, how Jewish (or how Christian) "the" *judeoconversos* "really" were. A dominant position has it that crypto-Judaism was widespread among the New Christians in Spain, Portugal, and the Americas throughout the early modern period, and that therefore it is correct to regard *judeoconversos* as staunch or at least "potential" Jews connected by their ancestry, history,

generally, is Herman Prins Salomon, "Crypto-Judaism or Inquisitorial Deception?" *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 89, 1–2 (1998), 131–54.

[24] On this case and similar ones, see, for instance, Haim Beinart, "Inés of Herrera del Duque: The Prophetess of Extremadura," in Mary E. Giles, ed., *Women in the Inquisition: Spain and the New World* (Baltimore, 1999), 42–52.

[25] Gretchen Starr-Lebeau, *In the Shadow of the Virgin: Inquisitors, Friars, and Conversos in Guadalupe, Spain* (Princeton, 2003), 5.

religious ideas, practices, and hopes to the Jewish people.[26] A dissenting position has it that the Holy Office fabricated much evidence of crypto-Judaizing in order to enrich itself, satisfy anti-Jewish prejudices, and quench a strong thirst for political and cultural power. According to this interpretation, most *judeoconversos* were genuine (if imperfect) Christians, innocent of the religious crimes for which the tribunals officially persecuted them.[27]

Barring all biases, scholars' frequent ascription of Jewishness to *conversos* is founded on two related premises: that inquisitorial tribunals knew well what early modern Judaism was, and could therefore identify and root it out with relative precision; and that the massive anecdotal evidence collected by inquisitorial tribunals of New Christians' "Judaizing" is, by and large, accurate and reliable. To explore this dominant interpretation and its alternatives, it is first necessary to discuss the establishment and operation of "The Spanish Inquisition," and of inquisitorial notions of Judaism and Jewishness, in some detail.

INQUISITORIAL "JUDAISM" AND THE INTEPRETATION OF *CONVERSO* IDENTITIES

Between 1233 and 1254, the Holy See authorized the first inquisitorial tribunals on Iberian soil. Operating in the Crowns of Aragon and Navarre, these courts existed chiefly in order to pre-empt the spread of the Cathar heresy that had surfaced in neighboring Languedoc. It was not until centuries later that the Catholic Monarchs, Fernando II of Aragon and Isabel I of Castile, were able to institute a centralized Holy Office of the Inquisition – now known somewhat inaccurately as "The Spanish Inquisition" – that would address the alleged problem of Judaizing among New Christians with forceful efficiency. Pope Sixtus IV authorized the founding of such a body between 1477 and 1483, effectively giving the dual monarchy control over the new institution despite the Holy See's formal authority over the tribunals.

The unified Holy Office was the first organization whose jurisdiction traversed the domains of Fernando and Isabel (later including Navarre as well) and was directly answerable to the monarchs. As such, the institution represented one of the earliest and most significant milestones on the road

[26] This is the classic position articulated in Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, II, 424–5; and I. S. Révah, "Les Marranes," *Revue des Études Juives* 118 (1959–60), 29–77.

[27] See, for instance, António José Saraiva, *The Marrano Factory: The Portuguese Inquisition and its New Christians, 1536–1765*, trans., rev. and aug. H. P. Salomon and I. S. D. Sassoon (Leiden, 2001).

to absolutist rule, presaging the later consolidation of Spanish domains into a more or less unitary state. As a product of fifteenth-century Ibero-Catholic cultures, the new Holy Office brought together a theologically based anti-Judaism and anti-Islamism that had been prevalent during the late *reconquista* with a more nakedly ethnic animus against *judeoconversos* (as well as against Jews and Moriscos) that developed from 1391 to 1492 and was expressed primarily in terms of "blood" and "race" (*raza*).

The structure and principal procedures of the unified Spanish Inquisition (1478–1834) remained relatively unchanged for centuries, and formed the basis of those adopted by the Portuguese Holy Office during its own long period of operation (1536–1821).[28] Fourteen permanent inquisitorial tribunals covering wide jurisdictions began their activities in the crowns of Aragon, Castile, and Navarre between 1482 and 1638. Located in major ecclesiastical and political centers, each of these tribunals was overseen by a supreme tribunal, the Royal Council of the Supreme and General Inquisition, known colloquially as *la suprema*. Additional tribunals operated under *la suprema*'s authority at various times in Sardinia, Mallorca, Sicily, the Canary Islands, and the Spanish Indies. Canon lawyers from the secular clergy and the Dominican order staffed virtually all of the tribunals. Theologians and commissioners drawn from the religious orders assisted the ecclesiastical officers, as did lay functionaries called "familiars," including bailiffs, notaries, and spies, belonging to the auxiliary confraternity of St. Peter Martyr.

The chief purpose of the unified Spanish Inquisition at the time of its founding was to discover and uproot heresy, especially crypto-"Judaism." That objective was consistent with the nature of the institution as an arm of the Church whose primary jurisdiction was over baptized subjects, not "infidel" minorities. By and large, the tribunals' interest in and authority over non-Christian groups was extremely limited. In the rare cases in which the Holy Office prosecuted unconverted, openly professing Jews, for example, it was usually because witnesses had accused the individuals in question of teaching New Christians how to "Judaize" and/or helping them to do it.

To begin the inquests, the tribunals traveled to towns and cities within their respective jurisdictions and issued public Edicts of Faith – that is,

[28] On inquisitorial procedures, see, for instance, Joseph Pérez, *Crónica de la Inquisición en España* (Barcelona, 2002). An English version of the work has been published: Joseph Pérez, *The Spanish Inquisition: A History* (New Haven, 2005). The present discussion is based in part on David Graizbord, "La vida de los conversos en la Peninsula Ibérica después de 1492," in Julia R. Lieberman, ed., *Los estudios sefardíes para estudiantes de Español* (Fairview, 2008), 109–14.

formal calls to local residents to denounce, on pain of anathema, themselves and anyone else, dead or alive, whom they suspected of committing religious irregularities, even of expressing ideas that were or seemed contrary to Catholic Christianity. The summons included lists of beliefs and actions the Inquisition defined as religiously deviant. Many supposed telltale signs of "Judaism" formed part of the litany, such as wearing clean clothes and refraining from work on Friday nights in celebration of the Jewish Sabbath; preparing meat in unconventional ways (for instance, by removing the sciatic nerve); asking members of one's family for forgiveness at night; and refraining from making the sign of the cross. H. P. Salomon has observed that a primary function of these lists was didactic: by listening to the Edicts or reading them, potential denunciators learned what the Holy Office expected them to say about themselves and others; so did the suspects themselves.[29] Attesting to this is the boilerplate language of thousands of testimonies recorded in the course of inquisitorial proceedings. Needless to say, New and Old Christians who learned "Judaism" from the Edicts effectively perpetuated the inquisitorial enterprise by seeming to validate the notion of a vast Judaizing conspiracy, not to mention by providing the tribunals with human and material fodder.[30]

In its long history, the Spanish Holy Office and its Portuguese analog collected thousands of denunciations. Many of the latter may have had little to do with actual religious malfeasance and something to do with personal and political rivalries and animosities. Contreras's study of feuding families in sixteenth-century Lorca and Murcia, *Sotos contra Riquelmes*, is one of several works that illustrate the phenomenon of systematic, politically motivated informing.[31] For their part, the denunciations triggered thousands of arrests. Captured suspects were almost always held in inquisitorial jails and had their goods confiscated. Months or even years might pass before inquisitorial functionaries informed the detainees of the reasons for their arrest, let alone adjudicated their cases. Incarceration alone thus functioned as a powerful incentive for the prisoners to request a hearing, incriminate themselves, and in so doing bring closer the dates of their sentencing and eventual release.

Once the tribunals reckoned that they had collected sufficient accusatory testimony, trial hearings ensued. The inquisitors never disclosed the crimes of which the detainees had been accused, the names of their accusers, or the times and places in which the crimes had allegedly occurred – not even when detainees heard formal charges. Throughout the hearings, the Holy Office

[29] H. P. Salomon, *Portrait of a New Christian: Fernão Álvares Melo (1569–1632)* (Paris, 1982), 26–7.
[30] This sentence reworks one in David Graizbord, "La vida de los conversos," 112.
[31] Jaime Contreras Contreras, *Sotos contra Riquelmes* (Madrid, 1992).

demanded of the detainees that they confess their religious errors fully in order to permit reconciliation with the Church. Under the circumstances, the suspects had little recourse beyond guessing at the nature of the accusations and the identities of the accusers, and trying to discredit incriminating allegations as the products of personal animosity, not genuine piety. The tribunals very seldom prosecuted denunciators for rendering false witness. As a consequence, the strategy of painting accusers as "mortal enemies" usually failed, even when the suspects mounted an active defense complete with exculpating "character witnesses." It is hardly surprising that many suspects despaired of their ability to ascertain the crimes at issue, let alone prove their innocence. Several desperate prisoners beseeched the inquisitors to tell them what and how to confess: "Tell me what I have to say . . . I will tell all that you want. I have done everything that is said about me."[32] Even if detainees confessed to being religious criminals, this often did not relieve them of inquisitorial scrutiny if the confessions did not corroborate the inculpating testimony "thoroughly" and failed to yield the names of "accomplices."

At least six factors explain the systematic bulldozing of inquisitorial defendants – the very factors that also put in doubt the reliability of much of the inculpating information rendered by and about the suspects. Foremost among these factors was the tribunals' central premise that the accused were guilty until proven innocent. A second factor was the structure and composition of the judicial panels: judges, prosecutors, and appointed counselors to the defendants formed part of the same inquisitorial cohort, hence inquisitorial viewpoints and interests dominated the processes of adjudication. Third, the Holy Office had a vested interest in detaining and convicting suspected "heretics," even if no crimes had been committed, since throughout its history the institution was funded almost exclusively from the confiscation of the material property of detainees. Fourth, suspects always deposed in a coercive environment colored by the ever-present threat of physical abuse and public shame upon their sentencing. Defendants who failed to "fully" inculpate themselves and others earned the status of *negativos* ("deniers") and were thus liable to suffer judicial torture. Inquisitors considered confessions obtained through such violence to be valid if the confessants ratified them in a later hearing. Additional torture was the lot of those few who refused to confirm the content of their forced confessions. A fifth factor pushed defendants who had previously been convicted of heresy toward self-incrimination: the threat of death by public execution, a penalty that the tribunals reserved principally for such "relapsed" convicts.

[32] From the 1568 process of the Toledo tribunal against Elvira del Campo, quoted in Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 4 vols. (New York, 1906–7), III, 24. The archival source is not cited.

The Inquisition's approach to the suspects' ancestry constituted a sixth factor that worked to the detriment of *judeoconverso* and *morisco* defendants. Inquisitorial protocol demanded that suspects state their "stock and origin" – meaning their family's ethno-religious background – and relate their familial genealogies in detail. From the sixteenth century, lay and religious functionaries of the tribunals had to certify their own "cleanness." This institutional concern with genealogical information stemmed from the tribunals' pivotal assumption that people of "impure" blood were *ipso facto* prone to lapse or fall into heresy and form conspiratorial networks dedicated to the subversion of Catholic Christianity. Being descended from Jews (or Muslims) did not necessarily count as proof of guilt, to be sure. Suspects who declared that they were Old Christians were sometimes convicted of Judaizing. All the same, the Holy Office's habitual association of ancestral lineage and heresy meant that the scales of "justice" were always heavily loaded against New Christians and *moriscos*. This was especially true in Portugal, where a prisoner's New Christian extraction, however minimal, was a virtual guarantee of his or her prosecution.[33] In a broader historical and anthropological sense, the inquisitorial bracketing of the principles of "purity of blood" and "purity of faith" helped to enshrine both as part of a powerful ideology of human difference and a mainstay of a persecuting society. Religious animus was given a racist expression, and vice versa.

How, then, have scholars justified their reliance on grossly overdetermined inquisitorial findings of rampant Judaizing among *conversos*? Decades ago, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi provided one of the most compelling answers. The Iberian Inquisitions, he observes, maintained strict archival secrecy for centuries, hence it is absurd to suppose that in collecting and filing highly detailed, incriminating testimonies, whole generations of inquisitors were purposely transcribing a web of lies for the perusal of future inquisitors, people who knew that the "evidence" they were handling was bogus, and that therefore they too were perpetrating a gargantuan fraud.[34] Moreover, had *judeoconversos* not regarded themselves as Jews, they would not have joined openly Jewish communities, as a considerable number of them did, when they emigrated from the Iberian Peninsula from the late 1500s to the late 1600s.[35]

[33] Salomon, *Portrait of a New Christian*, 22, 25.

[34] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (Seattle, 1981), 23.

[35] Against this argument, see, for instance, David Graizbord, "Becoming Jewish in Early Modern France: Documents on Jewish Community-Building in Seventeenth-Century Bayonne and Peyrehorade," *Journal of Social History* 40, 1 (2006), 147–80.

Yerushalmi is right that one cannot dismiss out of hand masses of inquisitorial documents spanning centuries. However, for decades, the tendency among scholars has been precisely the opposite – namely, to accept more or less uncritically inquisitorial claims of Judaizing as historically truthful, and consequently to depict New Christians as a group of latent Jews. Indeed, some Iberian scholars still refer to *judeoconversos* as "Jews."[36]

Among recent critics of an uncritical acceptance of the *conversos*' Jewishness, Salomon has recently reiterated and developed a thesis, articulated already in 1969 by António José Saraiva, that the Portuguese and Spanish Inquisitions by and large manufactured "Jews" out of loyal Christians. The Saraivan counter-thesis centers on the six factors we have outlined above, and many others, such as the forced, hackneyed quality of countless recorded confessions. One factor worth mentioning here speaks specifically to Yerushalmi's contention about inquisitorial secrecy. Key aspects of the inquisitorial enterprise were in fact decidedly public in nature. Although the tribunals withheld some of the information they collected, this did not render their main findings, and inquisitorial activities in general, categorically off-limits to a broad public. It is possible to speak of a widespread inquisitorial "culture" precisely because one of the tribunals' main functions was to formulate and practice what Bartolomé Bennassar has dubbed a "Pedagogy of Fear."[37] Central to that purpose was the waging of propaganda campaigns designed to shame convicts and their families, inculcate a foreboding sense of the Inquisition's reach, and, more importantly, disseminate inquisitorial "knowledge" of what it meant to be a "Jew" (and a "Moor," a "Lutheran," a "sorcerer," etc.), and of who had been "unmasked" as "a Jew," so that good Christians would know whom to denounce – *judeoconversos* and *moriscos* – and how to do it correctly. Edicts of Faith, as well as processions and sermons performed in sentencing ceremonies known as *autos de fe* (Portuguese, *autos da fé*), were integral to these campaigns. Of particular note is the fact that *autos* broadcast minute details of the crimes for which defendants had been convicted. Here is but a fragment of a convict's sentence read publicly at an *auto de fe* in Granada in 1571. Save for a few details, the entire narrative is formulaic and there is no attempt to hide any details except the names of the informers and "accomplices":

[36] For instance, Pérez, *History of a Tragedy*, 68.

[37] Bartolomé Bennassar, "Patterns in the Inquisitorial Mind as the Basis for a Pedagogy of Fear," in Angel Alcalá, ed., *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind* (New York, 1984), 177–86.

Gonzalo Baez . . . of *converso* lineage . . . [confessed] that a certain person instructed him in the Law of Moses . . . [Baez] in turn taught Mosaic Law to many people, promoting it through citations of the Old Testament. [. . .] Baez taught one person that Our Lord Jesus Christ had been a whip sent by God to punish men. He also taught that one should not believe in Our Lady or any other saint, and that Our Lady had not been a Virgin when she gave birth . . . [He also] denied that there was purgatory or Hell, but only a grave that the Jews call Hell [*sic*].[38]

When one considers the social and demographic contexts of the public reading of penal sentences (let alone the printing and mass distribution of sentences, Edicts of Faith, etc.), any notion that inquisitorial vaults were hermetically sealed dissipates. The smallness of early modern Iberian communities by itself militated against institutional secrecy. If, for example, a convict was a resident of the locality in which her sentencing ceremony took place, spectators at the event might easily recognize him or her, as well as some of the details of his or her case, and perhaps even be able to piece together those data to ascertain the identity of anonymous denunciators mentioned in the public recitation of the crimes. Even a large city such as seventeenth-century Madrid, where the Holy Office celebrated spectacular *autos de fe* attended by thousands of onlookers, probably did not produce the same sense of utter anonymity that residents of modern metropoles experience, for the city had merely 150,000–175,000 inhabitants at the time of its political apogee.

Parading and publicly condemning "heretics" in *autos de fe* were not the only means by which the Holy Office humiliated its victims and inserted itself into public discourse in order to encourage ordinary men and women to produce formulaic accusations of heresy. There was also the requirement that the convicts wear penitential garments marked in large letters with their names, crimes, and punishments. After convicts died, their respective home parishes displayed the grotesque garments, called "Blessed Sacks" (*sacos benditos* or *sanbenitos*), sullying the offenders' memory and smearing their immediate families – possibly even generations of their descendants – with the taint of heresy.

There are, to be sure, problems with the "grand hoax" thesis. One of them is that much of the inculpating testimony that inquisitorial notaries recorded was far from formulaic, even if it was not entirely faithful to the facts, and hence projects a verisimilitude that the positivistic binary of "truth/falsehood" does not fully capture. By the same token, it is unrealistic to suppose that any but the most exceptional deponents were like skillful

[38] Excerpted in Lu Ann Homza, ed. and trans., *The Spanish Inquisition, 1478–1614: An Anthology of Sources* (Indianapolis, 2006), 244.

novelists, able to produce highly realistic testimony that was actually an elaborate fiction calibrated so as to give the Holy Office what it wanted while minimizing damage to themselves, their allies, and loved ones. With varying degrees of success, a few scholars of the European Inquisitions, such as Carlo Ginzburg, have applied a methodology that sidesteps the rigidity of "true/false" scenarios by analyzing "gaps" between what deponents are reported to have said, on one hand, and what the inquisitors wished to hear and often rendered into a standard phraseology, on the other. Ginzburgian readings of inquisitorial records reveal that official and popular notions of religion were distinct, highly diverse, and did not necessarily accord with the static, hypostatized "Judaism" and "Christianity" that undergird essentialist assertions about *judeoconversos*' "true" or "essential" religious selves.[39] This reminds us of a question that is crucial to the reconstruction of the history of that group: what did the Holy Office mean by "Judaism," and what difference does that make to an assessment of New Christian identities?

By and large, the Holy Office approached Judaism as if it were an inverted or dark mirror image of Ibero-Catholicism: "Jews," the Holy Office taught, followed the "old and void Law of Moses," while good Christians followed the exclusively valid "Law of Grace." According to this view, these laws were identifiable through the distinctive rituals they each stipulated, yet the difference between them was chiefly a matter of belief, or lack of belief, in the "true path" to personal salvation. As a national culture and an all-encompassing system of practice designed to sanctify creation and attain collective redemption, rabbinic Judaism had nothing to do with this notional "faith." Inquisitorial "Judaism" was but a theological straw man and polemical target. So too, "Judaizers," like "Jews," were stereotypes drawn from patristic and high medieval propaganda against Judaism. Specifically, they were anti-Christian misanthropes who followed the "Old Testament" literally, not according to its "true" spiritual meaning.

Some Spanish and Portuguese *judeoconversos* may have taken aspects of the inquisitorial image of Judaism to heart and adapted them to build their self-understanding. We have in mind a few *bona fide* dissidents whom the Holy Office treated as Jewish "catechizers" or "dogmatists" and allowed relative freedom of expression during judicial proceedings, partly because of the

[39] On the "gaps" and their significance, see, for instance, Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Ann Tedeschi (New York, 1986), xviii. On the assessment of *converso* identities by reference to abstract models of religion, see David Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580–1700* (Philadelphia, 2004), 106, 158–60.

prisoners' theological sophistication and the inquisitors' desire to trounce them in debate rather than impose the usual verbal formulas on their testimony. Luis de Carvajal the Younger (*el mozo*, 1566–96), whose case first came before the Mexico City tribunal in 1589, was one such defendant. An analysis of his writings reveals that he may have based some of them on Friar Luis de Granada's treatise *Símbolo de la fe*, and drawn inspiration from the ideas of an Old Christian hermit, the Biblicist Gregorio López. Carvajal wrote and spoke of himself as a mere "servant of God" (*siervo de Dios*) who wished to observe "the law of Moses with perfection." As Miriam Bodian has observed, Carvajal's diction strongly suggests his internalization of sixteenth-century Catholic mystical discourse, particularly that of Franciscan *perfectos* and other spiritualists.[40] The majority of New Christians who became entangled in inquisitorial webs were far less sophisticated and defiant of their interrogators than Carvajal. An engaging question is whether some of those subjects nonetheless embraced parts of the ersatz "Judaism" imputed to them in an earnest attempt to oppose the authoritarian Catholicism that victimized them.

Whatever the answer, recent studies suggest that religion is not the only means by which *judeoconversos* understood themselves. Responding in part to the ideologically laden substance of the trial records, Brian Pullan has articulated a premise toward which analyses of *judeoconverso* mentalities have moved in recent decades. New Christians, he writes, may have maintained a sense of Jewishness, not Judaism *per se*, by virtue of the fact that the Inquisition, the blood statutes, and other persecutory devices "drove conversos to become . . . an endogamous group holding itself apart from the Old Christians."[41] In line with this position, several scholars have focused attention on the ethnic and economic components of New Christian culture(s). Not surprisingly, the scholars have been fascinated by Portuguese *cristãos-novos*, a pivotal group to whose identities both elements were central, and to which we now turn.

PORTUGUESE NEW CHRISTIANS: AN EMERGENT ETHNO-MERCANTILE "NATION" IN IBERIA AND BEYOND, 1497–1700

Inquisitorial activity against Spanish New Christians may be divided into two main periods.[42] The first and most destructive period began in the

[40] On Carvajal, see Miriam Bodian, *Dying in the Law of Moses: Crypto-Jewish Martyrdom in the Iberian World* (Bloomington, 2007), 47–79.

[41] Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550–1670* (Oxford, 1983), 205.

[42] This section reworks material found in Graizbord, "La vida de los conversos."

1480s and stretched to the 1540s. One estimate has it that over that period the inquisitorial tribunal of Toledo alone tried some 582 cases against alleged Judaizers. Hundreds of the defendants were executed. The assault was so severe that by 1545 the number of cases brought against *conversos* declined significantly.[43] If any native Castilian crypto-Judaism had existed before then, it had probably been largely suppressed by that decade. The second, equally critical period of anti-*converso* activity in Spain corresponds to the entry of Lusitanian *conversos* into the Spanish fray, beginning with Philip III's virtual annexation of Portugal at the end of the sixteenth century, and concluding in the early 1730s.

There are several reasons for believing that crypto-Judaism may have survived among Portuguese *conversos*, therefore partly explaining the surge in inquisitorial activity against them: first, the sudden and cursory nature of the mass conversions of 1496–7; second, the absence of a Portuguese Inquisition from the time of the mass conversions (1496–7) until 1536; third, the historical context of those conversions. Unlike the ones in Spain, the conversions were preceded by a relatively unremarkable and fundamentally practical relationship, not by over a century of conversionist propaganda, followed by another century of acrimony between Jews and New Christians. The fourth reason is that Portuguese *cristãos-novos* included steadfast Jews who had fled from Spain to Portugal in 1492 rather than convert, and thus had probably accepted baptism in their new homes with great reluctance, if not insincerity.[44] The fifth reason is that, from 1497 to 1522, the Portuguese crown issued decrees forbidding ethnic discrimination in order to allow the neophytes to assimilate into Luso-Catholic society.[45] That *cristãos-novos* needed such protection is evident from an anti-*converso* riot in Lisbon that claimed the lives of hundreds of them in 1506.

As with the Spanish Holy Office, the problematic nature of inquisitorial "proof" of Judaizing collected in Portugal forbids sweeping characterizations of the "religion" or other supposed mental tendencies of *cristãos-novos*. The same is not true of their well-documented economic behavior and their social life as an *ethnos*, both within and beyond the mosaic of Ibero-Catholic societies.

Several *cristãos-novos* were eager to transform themselves and their families into "Old Christians." For example, the prominent merchant-financier

[43] Jean Pierre Dedieu, "The Archives of the Holy Office of Toledo as a Source for Historical Anthropology," in Gustav Henningsen and John Tedeschi, in association with Charles Amiel, eds., *The Inquisition in Early Modern Europe: Studies on Sources and Methods* (DeKalb, 1986), 181.

[44] Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, 4–8.

[45] María José Pimenta Ferro Tavares, *Los judíos en Portugal* (Madrid, 1992), 173–81.

Heitor Mendes (de Brito) reportedly disinherited one of his sons for marrying a fellow New Christian rather than an Old Christian aristocrat.[46] The anti-discriminatory decrees of 1497–1522 may nonetheless have allowed *judeoconversos* who did not wish to melt into the Old Christian majority to maintain a sense of their own difference in relative peace.[47] For them, marrying fellow *cristãos-novos* became a primary way of cultivating that difference. Such endogamy made possible wide-ranging economic cooperation between *cristãos-novos* and served as a pillar of their ethnic solidarity across religious and socio-economic lines.[48] Members of the mercantile "Nation" (*nação*), as the Luso-*conversos* came to be known, forged a host of tightly knit mercantile networks linking various port cities and other economic centers. Those networks capitalized on the centrality of Spain and Portugal to a vast system of international trade that included Iberian possessions in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, as well as mercantile hubs in the North Atlantic and the Ottoman Mediterranean – Amsterdam, Antwerp, Venice, Livorno, London, Bayonne, Hamburg, and Istanbul, among others.[49] Trade within the networks developed significantly from the sixteenth through the seventeenth centuries as *cristãos-novos* left Portugal in large numbers to escape the notoriously aggressive Portuguese Inquisition and take advantage of economic opportunities elsewhere. The resulting "sojourner communities" and mercantile "houses" of the Nation articulated a wide Luso-*converso* diaspora.[50] Grandees of the Nation sometimes coordinated political action to secure their economic interests and respite from inquisitorial persecution for their entire *nacão*.[51]

[46] Claude B. Stuczynski, "New Christian Political Leadership in Times of Crisis: The Pardon Negotiations of 1605," in Moshe Orfalí, ed., *Bar-Ilan Studies in History V* (Ramat Gan, 2007), 64.

[47] Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, 8.

[48] Bernardo López Belinchón, *Honra, libertad y hacienda. Hombres de negocios y judíos sefardíes* (Alcalá de Henares, 2001), 41. On the self-concept(s) of the Portuguese New Christians, see the studies collected in David Graizbord and Claude Stuczynski, eds., *Jewish History* 25, 2 (2011), special issue on "Portuguese New Christian Identities, 1516–1700."

[49] On this subject, see, for example, Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas Within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden, 2002). See also Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* (Baltimore, 2009).

[50] On these networks, see Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (New York, 2007).

[51] On this subject, see, for instance, Stuczynski, "New Christian Political Leadership."

When Philip III of Spain assumed the Portuguese crown in 1580, he abolished a ban against the emigration of *cristãos-novos* that had been in effect intermittently since 1499. This opening, and a General Pardon of 1605 – obtained by wealthy Luso-*conversos* who bribed the Habsburg state, its chief minister, the Duke of Lerma, and members of its royal High Council for Portugal – which temporarily limited the reach of the Portuguese Inquisition, motivated hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Portuguese *conversos* to relocate to Spain. Philip and his successor, Philip IV (1621–65), then recruited some of the wealthiest of them to buttress the sputtering Habsburg economy. A few prominent *hombres de negocios* ("businessmen") of the Nation then lent vast sums to the Habsburg state. Meanwhile, Luso-*conversos* with administrative skills and commercial contacts acquired lucrative royal contracts known as *asientos* at various levels of the governmental apparatus. The vast majority of the immigrants also participated in the global economy of the Habsburg Empire as wholesalers, retailers, and in other modest capacities. Many were connected to the trading networks that Luso-*conversos* had painstakingly built in Iberia and throughout the growing *converso* and Sephardic Diaspora.[52]

While the unstable yet still dynamic economy of the Habsburg Empire benefited from the influx of *cristãos-novos* to Spain, bigotry against *conversos* intensified and acquired a strong anti-Portuguese and anti-mercantile coloring. This phenomenon echoed one that had already taken place in Portugal and its Empire, where terms such as "businessmen" (*homens de negocios*) and "merchants" (*mercadores*) had become virtually synonymous with *cristão-novo* and *judeu* in colloquial usage. So, too, speakers of Castilian came to employ the words for "Portuguese," "businessman," and "merchant" in the 1600s to refer to New Christians.[53] For its part, the Spanish Inquisition took new aim against *conversos*. The numbers of those prosecuted for "Judaizing" in Castile grew steadily, especially from 1580. Virtually all the defendants accused of crypto-Judaism were classified (in some cases, misclassified) as "Portuguese." By and large, they included petty tax administrators, customs officers, smugglers, traveling salesmen, petty brokers, marginally employed merchants' assistants, bauble-sellers, and, especially, tobacco-stall keepers, mercers, textiles merchants, and their families.[54] The new wave of inquisitorial activity reached a psychological

[52] On Portuguese *conversos* in seventeenth-century Spain, see James C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Bankers at the Court of Spain, 1626–1650* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1983); López Belinchón, *Honra, libertad y Hacienda*; and Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *Los extranjeros en la vida española durante el siglo XVII y otros artículos* (Seville, 1996), 23–181.

[53] See Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute*, 50–62.

[54] This is according to the summary on the Toledo tribunal provided by Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven, 1997), 199.

pinnacle at the opening of the 1630s with the prosecution of a few Portuguese New Christian families that had settled in Madrid. Testimony collected in their cases yielded a legend that the detainees had tortured an effigy of Christ, and that the statue had miraculously bled, cried, and asked its torturers for respite. After undergoing arduous inquisitorial trials, all the detainees received penal sentences at a colossal *auto de fe* held in the presence of Philip IV.[55]

The "Portuguese of the Nation" continued to play the role of scapegoats for an entire society until the end of the century. After 1700, however, the number of prosecutions in Castile declined sharply, partly owing to the fact that, after Portugal's secession in 1640, the steady immigration of Luso-*conversos* to Spain had diminished. The number of trials of *conversos* would rise again only between 1718 and 1727, at a time when the Spanish Holy Office was struggling to shore up what was by then its worsening political and economic position. Like Spain itself, which had become a second-rate power, the Holy Office was by this time no longer the vanguard of the Counter-Reformation. Now the Spanish Inquisition preyed on an ever-diminishing number of older, indigent people of conceivable New Christian ancestry. Great Luso-*converso asentistas* ("royal contractors") had been among the Holy Office's most prized sources of income in the mid-1600s, but had since disappeared because they had all already been tried.[56]

Portugal's independence scarcely affected the situation of that country's New Christian minority in the short term, even though several *cristãos-novos* had supported the secessionist cause. Inquisitorial activities in Portugal continued, their ferocity unabated, into the early 1700s. Trials of notorious "heretics," such as the playwright António José da Silva (1705–39), illustrated the cultural and political power of a rapacious institution.[57] His nickname, "O Judeu" ("The Jew"), and the fact that the Holy Office prosecuted him for allegedly Judaizing, reveal how present "Jews" still were in the imagination of Lusitanians, even centuries after the mass conversions of 1496–7. However, Portuguese policy with regard to *cristãos-novos* had, in fact, begun to change well before the writer's trial. From 1674 to 1681, an ascendant crown dramatically curbed the authority of the Holy Office.[58] Then, under the reformist Marques de Pombal (1699–1782), anticlericalism finally triumphed. In 1773, the Portuguese state outlawed the legal distinction between New and Old Christians. Partly as a result of these developments,

[55] On this *cause célèbre*, see Ignacio Pulido Serrano, *Injurias a Cristo: religión, política, y antijudaísmo en el siglo XVII* (Alcalá de Henares, 2002), 123–55, 269–344.
[56] Pérez, *Crónica de la Inquisición*, 230.
[57] Regarding this playwright, see, for example, Saraiva, *The Marrano Factory*, 95–9.
[58] Ferro Tavares, *Los judíos*, 317, 357; more generally, Saraiva, *The Marrano Factory*, 218–34.

and partly as a result of the gradual disappearance of New Christians as an identifiable minority, the widespread persecution of *conversos* withered away. So did the Portuguese Inquisition, which was abolished in 1821.

After a brief revival following the Napoleonic wars, the Spanish Holy Office was itself irrevocably dissolved in 1834. This, after all, was the period of the modern nation-state in Europe and the concomitant decline of religious institutions. Statutes of Purity of Blood remained in effect in some quarters until the twentieth century, but they were mere remnants of a bygone era. As for the New Christians in Spain, it is clear that they had largely receded as targets of systematic persecution by the 1730s. Emigration and assimilation were probably among the chief causes of this recession.

How many New Christian émigrés blended into existing Christian communities outside Spain, Portugal, and their respective dependencies is difficult, perhaps impossible, to ascertain. We do know, however, that emigrants who did not do so adopted normative Judaism in such places as Italy, the Netherlands, and the Levant. These "New Jews" became integral parts of a wider and quite diverse diasporic culture. In particular, their social center of gravity shifted from Iberia to Sephardic milieus. Yet the émigrés did not always fuse demurely into their Jewish environments. Rather, they (re)defined themselves as members of a proud "Spanish and Portuguese Hebrew Nation" quite distinct from non-Sephardic Jews and even from older communities of Sephardim. Officially and unofficially, many of the "New Jews," as well as their children, believed that their "Nation" included *conversos* who still resided in the Iberian Peninsula as practicing Catholics, and whose commitment to Jews and Judaism was far from certain. In any case, the refugees and their immediate descendants persisted in cherishing and even romanticizing their bonds to Iberian cultures that had rejected them, even while lionizing inquisitorial martyrs who affirmed their Judaism to the point of death.[59] The incongruity of *judeoconversos*' experience as insiders and outsiders of Iberian cultures had clearly left an imprint on early modern Jewish history.

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CHAPTER 8

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EAST EUROPEAN JEWRY

ISRAEL BARTAL

MIGRATION AND COLONIZATION

Early modern eastern European Jewry comprised the eastern branch of the Ashkenazic diaspora, residing throughout the lands of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. This segment of Ashkenazic Jewry was formed through an extended encounter between Jewish immigrants from the communities of central and western Europe, who spoke a Judeo-German vernacular, and the Jews who preceded them in the region and spoke a Slavic language called, in Hebrew sources, *leshon rusiya* ("the language of Russia"). The immigrants brought with them not only their language – referred to in Hebrew sources as *leshon ashkenaz* ("the language of Ashkenaz") and in Yiddish as *taytsh* (from *Teutsch* ["German"]), and later transformed into eastern European Yiddish – but also their version of the liturgy, their religious customs, and the model of communal organization that had prevailed in the towns of central Europe. By the turn of the fifteenth century, the cultural tradition imported from Ashkenaz had become the dominant culture in the new communities being formed.

The first Jewish settlements were established in western Poland, in the towns to which German settlers had migrated. In the ensuing years, the immigrants' communities spread to the eastern and southern regions of the Kingdom of Poland, and, with the passage of time, the eastern branch of the Ashkenazic dispersion acquired its own character, differing substantially from that of the western branch. The Jews of Germany and the Jews of Poland–Lithuania became two separate groups. By the second half of the eighteenth century, with the increasing acculturation of Jews in the western areas, the Jews in the eastern and western regions came to be called *Ostjuden* and *Westjuden*, respectively. The significance of the terms was more than merely geographic: the western Jews began to serve as a sociocultural model for philanthropic and political activism directed toward 'improving'

This chapter was translated from the Hebrew by Joel Linsider. Except when otherwise noted, translations from Hebrew sources are by the present translator.

the lot of their eastern brethren. The distinction between the two cultural groups was fed by ideas of the European Enlightenment and contributed significantly to the negative image of Poland, Lithuania, and Russia that developed in western Europe.[1] It played a central role both in the Jewish Enlightenment's reformative discourse and in modern antisemitism's deprecation of the Polish Jew. The *Ostjuden* were seen by advocates and critics alike as vestiges of the pre-modern world of the Polish–Lithuanian communities – an extra-European culture having no place in the contemporary world. This pre-modern society was regarded as antithetical to everything represented by the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment. In short, the distinctive qualities of a venerable community with a deeply rooted tradition, which by the nineteenth century had become the largest Jewish community in the world, were consigned to oblivion, or at least to reform and amelioration, by the same political authorities that put an end to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth as part of the transition from early modernity to the modern era. In what follows, I will describe the formative processes that produced and shaped eastern European Jewry and its distinctive qualities, processes that went forward at the end of the early modern period as the Polish state was unraveling and becoming exposed to the changes wrought by modernity.

We have only limited and fragmentary information about the Jewish communities in the eastern regions of the European continent prior to the thirteenth century. For hundreds of years, Jews had been migrating to the areas that came under the rule of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in early modern times. They came to those parts both from the southeast and from the west – the former from communities within the eastern Roman Empire and the latter from western and central Europe, from communities that had been within the western Roman Empire and its successor kingdoms. The earliest Jewish presence in the southeastern part of the continent was in the areas north of the Black Sea, but scholars have had difficulty in tracing historical continuity between the Jews who lived in the area during the Hellenistic, Byzantine, and Gothic periods and those who resided in the Slavic principalities hundreds of years later. There is archaeological evidence of Jews living in the Greek settlements north of the Black Sea during the first centuries CE. Hundreds of monuments bearing inscriptions in Hebrew and Greek have survived, as have illustrations of Jewish ritual objects such as *menorot, lulavim*, and *etrogim*.

[1] On the image of eastern Europe in the context of modernization, see Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994); Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia, History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford, 2010), 13–62.

Beginning in the seventh century, the Khazar kingdom spread through the steppes lying between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. The conversion to Judaism of the Khazar royal family and the acceptance of Judaism by a segment of the Khazar population seems to have brought about the expansion of the Jewish presence northward and eastward from the shores of the Black Sea. The Khazar kingdom went into decline at the end of the tenth century, following its military defeat at the hands of the Russians, and it later disappeared entirely. The fate of the Jews living in Khazaria following the disappearance of the great Khazar state has engaged the imagination of historians, authors, and political activists for nearly 200 years, as they attempted to link the origins of eastern European Jews to the descendants of the Khazar converts who spread throughout the Slavic areas of the continent. But there is no written evidence of the presence in Poland–Lithuania of Jews who had migrated there from Khazaria, and it may be assumed that those migrants, if in fact there were any, did not leave an enduring mark on the communities in which they settled.[2]

The reports we have about the presence of Jews in eastern Europe before their mass migration from the German lands to Poland come from the areas annexed to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[3] There is no doubt, for example, that between the ninth and twelfth centuries, Jews were living in Kiev, capital of the Kievan Russian principality, which had been under Khazar rule prior to the end of the tenth century.[4] One of the most important Slavic chronicles contains the word "Zhidi," but it is not entirely clear that it refers to the quarter in which the Jews lived.[5] Jewish traders from Kiev maintained commercial relations with Prague and Regensburg, making their way by caravan through Poland and Hungary. During the twelfth century, the city was home to Rabbi Moses of Kiev, a sage who corresponded on halakhic matters with the sages of Ashkenaz and with the head of the Babylonian *yeshiva*. Hundreds of miles to the west, at the eastern edges of the Holy

[2] The most recent studies related to the Khazar kingdom were published in Peter B. Golden, Haggai Ben-Shammai, and András Róna-Tas, eds., *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives: Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Khazar Colloquium Hosted by the Ben Zvi Institute* (Leiden, 2007).

[3] See Israel Ta-Shma, "On the History of the Jews in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Poland," *Polin* 10 (1997), 287–317; Alexander Kulik, "Jews and Slavs in the Middle Ages" [Hebrew], *Pe`amim* 111–12 (2007), 185–208.

[4] On the Jewish presence in Kiev, see Omelian Pritsak and Norman Golb, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, NY, 1982).

[5] Omelian Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews in Eastern Europe in Relation to the Khazars," in Howard Aster and Peter Potichny, eds., *Jewish–Ukrainian Relations in Historical Perspective* (Edmonton, 1988), 11–13.

Roman Empire, tombstones bearing Hebrew inscriptions attest to the presence of Jews as early as the end of the twelfth century in western Poland and in Silesia, then part of Poland. In Breslau, a tombstone discovered in 1917 marks the grave of one David, son of Sar Shalom, who died on 25 Av 4963 (August 4, 1203).[6] Jewish settlement in Poland and Lithuania developed over the ensuing hundreds of years as the areas between their eastern and western margins were filled.

A clear indicator of the distinctive Jewish identity that took shape in eastern Europe was the community's significant demographic scope. Despite the absence of reliable numerical data on the Jewish population in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, scholars agree that the period between 1500 and 1648 saw a vast increase – by a factor of between fifteen and twenty – in the Jewish population. In 1500, the estimated number of Jews was between 10,000 and 30,000, but by 1648, on the eve of the Cossack–Polish War, the number was estimated at between 200,000 and 450,000.[7] The censuses conducted in 1764 and 1765, with the demise of the inter-communal council structure that had overseen Jewish life in Poland–Lithuania, are generally taken to imply the presence of some 750,000 Jews in the kingdom at the time.[8] Until the middle of the seventeenth century, the immigration of Jews from the west contributed significantly to the demographic growth of Polish Jewry, but after 1648, migratory patterns were reversed and Polish Jews set out for central and western Europe or to the southeastern part of the continent. As late as during the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), Jewish refugees from the towns of Germany could still find a haven in Poland, but in the wake of the Cossack Revolt and the ensuing mass flight of Jews from the communities in Ukraine, Jewish refugees from Poland began arriving in western Europe. Given the diminished migration from the west, natural growth appears to be the primary factor underlying the increase in population; that suggests the communities in Poland enjoyed a reasonable standard of living, a sense of security, and stable family units.

[6] For a sketch of the inscription on the tombstone, see Meir Balaban, "History of the Jews in the Middle Ages" [Hebrew], in Israel Halpern, ed., *Beit Yisra'el be-Polin* [The House of Israel in Poland], vol. I: *Korot Dor va-Dor Meshek ve-Kalkalah* (Jerusalem, 1948), 6. See also Marcin Wodzinski, *Hebrajskie inskrypcje na Śląsku XIII–XVIII w.* (Wrocław, 1996), 167–70.

[7] Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland* (Philadelphia, 1972), 311, 318; Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1976), XVI, 207; Shaul Stampfer, "Population Growth and Migration in Polish-Lithuanian Jewry in the Modern Period" [Hebrew], in Israel Bartal and Israel Gutmann, eds., *Kiyum va-Shever, Yehudei Polin le-Dorotehem* [Broken Chain: Polish Jewry Through the Ages], vol. I: *Pirkei historiyah* (Jerusalem, 1997), 264–7.

[8] Raphael Mahler, *Yidn in amolikn Poyln in likht fun tsifern* (Warsaw, 1958); Shaul Stampfer, "The 1764 Census of Polish Jewry," *Bar Ilan: Annual of Bar Ilan University* 14–15 (1989), 41–58.

Historian Salo W. Baron cites the explanation for the impressive growth in Jewish population offered in a well-known seventeenth-century anti-Jewish treatise written by Sebastian Miczynski of Krakow: "[they] hide their total number, even though they multiply enormously, for they do not die in wars, they run away before the 'air' [plague], and marry very early."[9] Baron noted additional factors accounting for the demographic growth: the absence from Jewish society of any tradition of asceticism or monasticism; the ready availability of food, thanks to the economic ties that were maintained with landowners; and the existence of charitable and welfare organizations that helped to reduce infant and child mortality. Even after the partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century, the number of Jews continued to grow markedly, both in Galicia (the area annexed to Austria) and in the regions annexed by the Russian Empire (see figure 8.1).

In the nineteenth century, most of the world's Jews lived in eastern Europe or had emigrated from it. The ongoing demographic growth led to overcrowding in urban settlements and constant internal migration to more easterly and southerly regions. In contrast to the western branch of the Ashkenazic dispersion, Jews in Poland–Lithuania formed the majority, or at least a sizable minority, in many towns. In describing the situation of Polish Jews during the eighteenth century, Gershon Hundert has written that "the fact is that half of the urban population was Jewish, and in large parts of the country, more than half. This is one of the strongest arguments for the thesis that Jews in the eighteenth-century Polish Commonwealth cannot be characterized properly as a minority group."[10]

The Jews of Poland–Lithuania played a prominent colonizing role, taking part in the establishment of new cities within the kingdom from the beginnings of their immigration in the twelfth century until the nineteenth. The ongoing, centuries-long Jewish migrations, primarily from Germany, were a part of the overall settlement of Poland, a process that accelerated in the wake of the Mongolian incursions of the mid thirteenth century. It produced a continuous settlement that lasted until the communities were destroyed in the Holocaust. Like the German, Bohemian, Flemish, or Dutch immigrants, the Jews from the Ashkenazic communities took part in establishing new cities, or settled in existing cities that they reorganized. They moved from west to east, settling first in western Poland, then in its eastern parts, and, finally, in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The territorial expansion and flourishing economy of Poland between 1500 and 1648 made it even more attractive to migrants hoping to settle in the

[9] Baron, *Social and Religious History*, XVI, 201.

[10] Gershon D. Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century, A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004), 215–16.

Figure 8.1 Partitions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, 1793, and 1795.

broad areas in which wealthy aristocrats ("magnates") had founded new cities and established vast holdings encompassing dozens of villages. It is estimated that Poland before 1500 had some 50 Jewish communities while the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the end of the fifteenth century had only

4. Some 60 years later, the Kingdom of Poland boasted 173 Jewish communities and Lithuania more than 20.

With the political unification of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, settlement activity increased in the southeastern part of the unified state. Heavy eastward migration from the cities of northern and western Poland brought about a substantial increase in the Jewish population on both sides of the Dnieper River. Shmuel Ettinger's studies have shown that dozens of new communities were established in Ukrainian areas between 1569 and 1648. Before unification, Ukraine had 24 Jewish settlements, numbering some 4,000 people. Eighty years later, the same areas had 115 communities with more than 51,000 Jews.[11]

The common economic interests of the upper reaches of the Polish nobility and the Jewish settlers grew stronger in the face of economic competition from Christian burghers in the established towns. The communities established in the eastern reaches of Ukraine were situated in a border region at the northern edge of the steppe, an area exposed to attacks by armed bands that could not always be controlled by the owners of the new estates. At times, the Cossack forces serving in the Polish military would join with their Greek-Orthodox coreligionists, who were oppressed by the Catholic nobility, and attack the Jewish agricultural lessees, who were in charge of the means of production on the magnates' properties. In the mid seventeenth century, many Jews fled their homes in the wake of the destruction wrought by the Cossack rebellion of 1648–9, the wars fought by Russia and Poland in Ukraine and Lithuania from 1654 to 1667, and the wars fought on Polish soil around the same time. Jewish refugees from Poland and Lithuania reached Hungary, Holland, Italy, the German lands, and elsewhere, and some settled permanently in their new homes. But amidst the political and economic decline that beset the Commonwealth from the mid seventeenth century onward, the Jewish communities, notwithstanding the damage they suffered during the rebellion and the wars, recovered with striking speed and accommodated themselves to the changing political context. The migration from the western areas of Poland to the eastern regions not only continued, it gained strength. Most of the refugees who had fled returned and settled in the towns. They were joined there by Jewish settlers who flocked to the magnates' estates to escape both the economic contraction in the towns of western Poland and the hostility of the Christian burghers, and helped to rebuild the destroyed towns. By the middle of the eighteenth century, most of the Jews in Ukraine lived in proprietary towns or

[11] Shmuel Ettinger, "The Jewish Role in the Colonization of Ukraine" ([Hebrew], *Zion* 21 (1956), 124. On the eastward expansion and the Jewish part in colonization, see Baron, *Social and Religious History*, XVI, 166–92.

villages owned by the Polish nobility; in 1764, the Jews in the eastern regions of the Commonwealth numbered more than 70 percent of the total Jewish population. Of the forty-four towns having a Jewish population greater than 1,000, twenty-seven were in Ukraine.[12]

At the end of the early modern period, then, Jewish settlement was concentrated in proprietary cities owned by Polish aristocrats and in settlements on the magnates' estates. The demographic and geographic center of gravity had shifted to the eastern districts of the Commonwealth, and these changes played an important part in the shaping of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry. The ties between the Jewish masses of White Russia and Ukraine and their brethren in the communities of Germany were substantially weakened, though not eliminated. The social, religious, and cultural character of the prepartition Polish-Jewish town differed greatly from that of the small Jewish communities found in the mid eighteenth century in some of the German towns. The existence at the end of the early modern period of a large population of Jews, numbering in the hundreds of thousands and living in a religious, linguistic, and cultural environment different from that of their neighbors, laid the foundation for the persistence of eastern European Jewry's distinctive characteristics. The growing density and concentration of Jews in the eastern half of the Polish–Lithuanian kingdom was a decisive factor in creating a demographic and social environment in which Jews did not see themselves as a minority.[13] That environment persisted in the districts annexed to the Kingdom of Austria and the Russian Empire even after the Polish partitions – because, among other things, the proprietary cities owned by the nobility, in which Jews formed a majority of the population, survived for decades after Poland's loss of political independence. The existence of the "Jewish city," with its own geographic expanse, social institutions, and culture, continued long into the nineteenth century and determined in large part the manner in which modernization processes affected the millions of eastern European Jews.[14]

The mass migrations of Jews from one eastern European area to another did not end with Poland's loss of political independence in 1795. Quite the contrary: in the wake of the political changes that affected the Polish–Lithuanian kingdom, a new stage in Jewish migration within eastern Europe opened up. In the Posen (Poznan) district that had been annexed to Prussia, the number of Jews fell by almost one-third between 1805 and 1849, the result of a mass migration induced by harsh economic conditions.[15]

[12] Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 25. [13] Ibid., 31.
[14] Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772–1881* (Philadelphia, 2005), 38–46.
[15] William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772–1914* (Chicago, 1980), 9–152.

Other Jews migrated from Galicia to the districts north of the Black Sea that Russia had conquered from the Turks, and to Bukovina, Bessarabia, Moldavia, and Wallachia (which was still part of the Ottoman Empire). Empress Catherine II, during whose reign Russia annexed large areas in the west (from Poland) and the south (from the Ottoman Empire), encouraged mass migration and settlement in the new southern districts, with the goal of promoting economic activity there. At the same time, the Russian government wanted to thin out the crowded Jewish communities in the towns of Lithuania and White Russia. As early as the first years following the Russian Empire's annexation of the eastern part of White Russia, there had begun a massive Jewish emigration to the areas in southern Ukraine that had been conquered from the Ottomans. In those areas, the imperial government undertook a large-scale initiative to establish new cities, and the Jews played a substantial role in carrying it out, along with German, Greek, Armenian, Serb, and other migrants. During the first half of the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of Jews moved from the communities of Lithuania, Congress Poland, and White Russia to the southern regions dubbed "New Russia" and to Bessarabia. Many Jews left Austrian Galicia and settled in the Russian part of Ukraine. Odessa, Russia's most important outlet to the Black Sea, had 5 resident Jews in 1791. A century later, it was the largest Jewish community within the Russian "Pale of Settlement," numbering close to 140,000 people. The Russian government also promoted the establishment in the southern regions of Jewish agricultural settlements that absorbed thousands of settlers from the northern provinces. Tens of thousands of Jews uprooted themselves from areas that were within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania before 1772 and moved westward, to Congress Poland, where new industrial centers were developing. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it appears that at least one-half of the Jews in the Russian Empire were living somewhere other than where their parents had grown up.[16]

ḤEVRA, KAHAL, AND *VA`AD*: THE JEWISH CORPORATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

The Jewish communities of medieval Ashkenaz differed from their counterparts in the Islamic lands in their decentralized governance. Even when intercommunal organizations arose that were recognized by the Polish,

[16] On patterns of Jewish migration in the Russian Empire after the partitions of Poland, see Shaul Stampfer, "Patterns of Internal Jewish Migrations in the Russian Empire," in Yaacov Roi, ed., *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union* (London, 1995), 28–47.

German, and Lithuanian governments, they did not enjoy the authority and power possessed by the centralized institutions of Jewish self-government in Babylonia or Egypt. The local community in Ashkenaz was the basic autonomous entity, and each community regarded itself as having authority that no other community could pre-empt. That tradition of governance spread from the German lands to eastern Europe and came to be recognized by the Polish kings. The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was itself a decentralized feudal state, within which various religious–ethnic groups enjoyed broad autonomy while being integrated into the kingdom's administrative structure. The Jewish immigrants joined a list of urban communities – merchants of German, Armenian, or other origins – each of which was recognized by the kingdom as having its own law. For example, the Polish kings granted immigrant merchants who settled in their lands after 1211 the *privilegium* ("bill of rights and obligations") that had been granted in 1188 to merchants in the German city of Magdeburg. Bernard Weinryb has used the image of a kaleidoscope to depict the multi-ethnic legal environment in which the eastern European Jewish community took shape:

> The Jewish group and its community organization, the *kehilla*, became a component of this kaleidoscope of legal systems and autonomous structures. Like the other estates and ethnic and religious minorities, the Jews were adjudicated according to their own laws. Their elders, some of whom had to collect taxes from the individual Jews and pay them in a lump sum, enjoyed autonomous status with special rights, responsibilities, and power over members of the *kehilla*.[17]

The legal standing of the Jewish settlers who arrived in the Kingdom of Poland and established new communities there was similar, soon after their arrival, to the status they had had in the cities of central Europe. A *privilegium* granted them by the ruler – in this case, the king of Poland – declared their rights and fixed their obligations. Legally, they were freemen, members of an autonomous corporation with a direct relationship to the king's treasury, and they enjoyed rights similar to those of other burghers. A substantial number of Jews in Poland–Lithuania received special *privilegia* from the nobility. Beginning in 1539, their direct ties to the king had become quite limited. The transition from royal cities to proprietary towns of the nobility or to their privately owned urban neighborhoods (in early modern Polish: *jurydiki*) accelerated during the early modern period, and by the turn of the eighteenth century, most of the Jewish communities were under the direct rule of aristocratic families. That transition intensified the decentralization of Jewish society and increased the involvement of the nobility in the

[17] Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland* (Philadelphia, 1972), 72.

Jewish communities' activities within their territories. One can trace 500 years of continuity from the first known *privilegium* – granted by King Bolesław the Pious in 1264 – to the legal documents under which Jews administered their communities during the time of the last pre-partition Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski.

The basic unit in the system of Jewish self-government in Poland–Lithuania was the urban community. Not every group of Jews living in a particular place was recognized by the authorities as a "community" (*kahal*), an organization able to represent Jewish interests before the government (be it king, noble, patron of a town, or Christian city council), responsible for collecting taxes from the population subject to its authority, and charged with running the community's internal affairs. It often happened that a large Jewish community was not recognized as a *kahal* in its own right and was subject to the administration of a neighboring community. Moreover, the *kahal* of a particular town would administer the affairs of Jews living nearby (referred to as *sevivot* ["environs"]). The term *kahal* also referred to the governing body that administered the community's affairs. Like other corporate bodies in the towns of Christian Europe (the local government, the guilds), the *kahal* had a clearly oligarchic quality: only a few families in the community supplied its members; a limited number of candidates were nominated for office; and only recognized men of wealth, who paid more than a certain amount in taxes, were eligible to stand for election. The institution of the *kahal* that developed and functioned during the times and in the geopolitical expanse in which the foregoing *privilegia* were in effect – the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, until the time of the last Polish king – provided the basis for a highly developed system of self-government and the unimpeded existence of economic, social, and religious elites within the eastern European communities.

Like the participants in any social organization, the members of the Jewish community were motivated by considerations of benefit, prestige, and wealth. But in pre-modern, internal Jewish political discourse, all of these were translated into clearly religious terms. The authority of the *kahal* to rule over the members of a community, to conduct its internal and external business, and to represent it before the government was derived simultaneously from religious law and from the *privilegium* granted to the community. One who refused to defer to the authority of the *kahal* was vulnerable to the ban (*ḥerem*) that might be imposed on him on a halakhic basis. At the same time, the authority of the Christian ruler was regarded as binding as a matter of Jewish law, under the halakhic principle of "the law of the kingdom is the law." The boundaries between Polish rule and that of the *kahal* were not always clear: Polish nobles who were the proprietors of cities routinely

intervened in the affairs of the Jewish community, and rival factions within Jewish society often relied on the support of non-Jewish rulers.

The members of the *kahal* were usually named to their positions through a complex process of indirect elections. The first stage involved the selection by lottery, from among a limited group of men endowed with wealth, pedigree, or rabbinic learning, of electors. The men who won the lottery would often choose a second group of electors, who, in turn, would choose the holders of each office within the *kahal*; that was the procedure in Krakow at the end of the sixteenth century. Ashkenazic communities ranging from Amsterdam, Strasbourg, and Metz, through Frankfurt and Prague, all the way to Lublin, Minsk, and Vilna practiced variations on election procedures of that sort. The members of the communal elite that participated actively in the political life of the communities in Poland–Lithuania from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth also held office in the federative organizations that extended beyond the individual communities.

The *kahal* played a wide range of roles within Jewish society in such areas as administration, economics, religion, education, and the provision of services. Some of these functions were carried out by appointees of the *kahal*. Others, especially in the larger communities, were carried out by internal corporate bodies (*ḥevrot* ["societies"]) under the supervision of the *kahal*. The community would hire the rabbi, entering into a contract with him for a fixed period and undertaking to pay his salary; his formal role was to rule on halakhic matters. There was also a court (*bet din*), whose judges were named by the electors. The *kahal* was responsible as well for the maintenance of educational institutions ranging from the schoolroom (*ḥeder*) for young children to the *yeshiva*. At times, it would even provide study helps (in Poznan, for example, the *kahal* printed booklets containing talmudic tractates to facilitate their study in the *ḥeder*). It also provided various municipal services (night-watching, bathhouses, chimney sweeping); supported the hiring of midwives; and, together with the *ḥevrot*, sustained the poor, tended to the ill (*bikur-ḥolim*), and maintained the community cemetery.

This wide range of roles had a clear corporative character: the *kahal* maintained prescriptive rights and monopolies and did not encourage free competition; the religious presence in economic and social activity was all-encompassing; the members of the community were bound to one another in their persons and property; and the *kahal*, for its part, was bound to them vis-à-vis the external governing authorities. This communal character gained clear textual expression in the *Pinkas ha-Kahal* ("Community Minute-Book") – simultaneously an archive, history book, electors' record, assemblage of economic and financial data,

and listing of legal precedents. Something listed in it had binding authority, and the document was generally preserved in the *kahal*'s chamber (*ḥeder ha-kahal*), under the protection of the *parnasim* ("community officials").

At the beginning of the early modern era, the autonomous Jewish organization in Poland–Lithuania grew beyond the bounds of the individual communities. The Council of the Four Lands and the Council of the Land of Lithuania were regional and national intercommunal Jewish federative organizations that were recognized by the authorities and whose activities were coordinated with them. They existed in the Polish–Lithuanian kingdom from the second half of the sixteenth century until they were abolished in 1764–5. Intercommunal federative organizations of various sizes functioned during that period throughout the Ashkenazic lands, from French Alsace in the west to Lithuania in the east; within them, representatives of the local communities worked to coordinate matters of common interest and maintain contact with government authorities. These organizations, known as *ve'adim* (sing., *va'ad* ["council"]), in many ways resembled their counterparts within the surrounding Christian societies. Like the Christian bodies, the Jewish organizations represented an ethnic or religious group whose members were dispersed in various communities throughout a political entity. The Jewish council paralleled the parliaments of various estates that convened at fixed intervals at fairs and market days in several towns. It also resembled the autonomous corporative organizations that were integrated, to one degree or another, with the systems of governance, administration, and tax collection maintained by the emperor, the king, or the prince.

The two eastern European councils were the largest and most highly developed units within the Jewish self-governance network that existed in the Ashkenazic dispersion during the Middle Ages and in early modern times. The regional and country-wide Jewish councils in Poland–Lithuania corresponded in great measure to the regional parliaments of the Polish nobility (*sejmiki*) and to the kingdom's Parliament (the Sejm). The councils of the lands in the Polish–Lithuanian kingdom had their origin in the first half of the sixteenth century, as the Polish kings undertook efforts to organize the collection of taxes from the Jewish communities and to institute centralized governance. Paralleling these efforts, which were not successful, during the ensuing years judicial bodies arose that came to be recognized as intercommunal courts; the first was at the Lublin fair. In addition, representatives of leading communities began to meet to deal with tax matters and with disputes between communities. The first known regulation of the Council of the Four Lands dates from 1580.

Even though there is a clearly evident hierarchical structure to the councils, we cannot speak of symmetry or uniformity in the representation

of communities in the intercommunity organizations that arose over the course of the seventeenth century. Moreover, representation was subject to changes that reflected the relative power of the various communities and their success in the struggles over control and over the relative shares of the tax paid to the crown. The basic unit of the two councils in the Commonwealth was the local community, administered, as already noted, by the *kahal*. The strongest and wealthiest of the communities, referred to as "principal communities," were represented in the Council of the District (*va'ad ha-galil*). The boundaries of the districts generally corresponded to the administrative divisions of the Polish–Lithuanian kingdom. The Council of the District would meet on days when fairs were held, and its structure was identical to that of the *kahal* within the local community. The District Councils and some principal communities were represented – again, not symmetrically – in the Council of the Four Lands (Va'ad Arba 'Aratzot). (The lands were Greater Poland, Little Poland, Volhynia, and Red Russia [Ruthenia]. At times there were only three lands; at others, there were five.) In 1717, the Council of the Four Lands included eighteen units that represented, it would appear, all the Jews under the Polish crown – nine communities and nine districts. In Lithuania, representation was even more restricted; only delegates from the leading communities ("communities of the heads of courts") participated regularly in the meetings of the Council. At first there were only three such communities (Brest, Grodno, and Pinsk); later, Vilna and Slutsk were added. Calculations by Israel Halpern suggest that only 1 percent of eligible voters in the local communities participated in the selection of representatives to the Council of the Four Lands in its latter years. The structure of the Council of the Four Lands and the Council of Lithuania also resembled that of the local *kahal*. It was headed by the parnas of the Council (Hebrew: *parnas ha-va'ad*; Polish, *marszalek*); funds were handled by a trustee (*ne'eman; wiernik*); relations with the authorities and lobbying on tax matters were handled by the council intercessor (*shtadlan; syndyk generalnosci*). The Council also had assessors (*shama'im; symplarzy*), who allocated the tax burden among the various communities, and a Council scribe, who recorded the regulations, decisions, and judicial rulings of the councils. The Council Records (*pinkasim*) were the binding documents that conferred validity on the Councils' decisions and actions. The Record of the Council of Lithuania for the years 1623 to 1765 was preserved and published in 1925; the Record of the Council of the Four Lands was lost except for a few pages. It was restored and published in 1945, followed by a second, expanded edition in 1990.

The standing of the two Councils as organs of self-government was never officially recognized by the Polish rulers. The only role they performed with royal recognition was related to the collection of the poll tax

from the Jews. The Councils maintained direct links to the Polish and Lithuanian treasuries and determined the internal allocation of the tax (which was divided into equal units of payment – *sekhumot; sympla*). At times, the tax was collected directly by the Councils and transferred to the royal treasury; at other times, the communities paid directly to the treasury or to military units that were financed by the Jewish poll tax. The records of taxes transferred to the military have been preserved and were recently studied by the Israeli scholar Julia Kalik.[18]

Unofficially, the two Councils played a variety of roles related to the religious, cultural, and economic life of the Jews in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. These roles pertained primarily to matters common to the communities and that could be dealt with only within an overall, federative framework. The Councils promulgated "supreme regulations" that were binding on all the communities and that related to morals and customs, commercial and financial activities, and charity. The Councils' courts served as a supreme tribunal, though acceptance of their decisions and rulings depended on voluntary acquiescence by the representatives of the leading communities and the District Councils. In addition, the Councils granted approbations to books; protected the rights of authors to their works; fought against religious heresy (as in the case of the Frankist movement in the mid eighteenth century); and supported emigrants from eastern Europe who had settled in the Land of Israel.

Communities outside the region (including Amsterdam, Hamburg, Jerusalem, and Frankfurt) looked to the Council of the Four Lands for help in resolving internal conflicts. The Councils, like the local Jewish communities, were financial institutions that borrowed money (from, among others, church institutions and religious orders) to fund their activities. Most of the Councils' energies were directed to defending Jewish interests, ranging from protecting the economic interests of Jews to combatting blood libels, something that became a central concern during the eighteenth century. As a practical matter, the Councils exercised narrow authority and had only limited power to influence either communities or individuals. That reality sometimes clashed with their idealized image, in the consciousness of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry, as a "government in miniature" and a moral and religious force that charted the course for all the Jews of the kingdom. Dov Ber of Bolechov, a Jewish wine merchant whose memoirs provide fascinating accounts of the final years of the Council of the Four Lands, wrote after its dissolution that the kingdom's

[18] Julia Kalik, *Scepter of Judah: The Jewish Autonomy in the Eighteenth-Century Crown Poland* (Leiden, 2009).

punishment for having abolished the Council was its own loss of independence through the partitions of Poland.[19]

In early modern times, *ḥevra, kahal*, and *va'ad* were the three social institutions around which eastern European Jewry took shape. A far-reaching and varied social network, linking community, intercommunity, and extra-community organizations, extended throughout the entire Commonwealth and endured into the nineteenth century. It encompassed, on the one hand, study groups, charitable organizations, and artisans' associations and, on the other, regional parliaments and country-wide councils. Within the framework of these organizations, hundreds of thousands of Jews lived their spiritual and temporal lives, struggled for economic sustenance and social standing, and transmitted their social values from one generation to the next. The geographic scope of that network, its vitality, and its persistence over time were among the distinctive markers of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Early modern times saw the development, within the eastern branch of the Ashkenazic dispersion, of a distinctive culture that characterized the Polish–Lithuanian Jewish communities for hundreds of years and accompanied the Jews of those communities wherever they migrated in modern times. It was the culture of an ethno-religious group that, over time, had shed progressively more of the cultural baggage brought by their forebears who had migrated from the more westerly Ashkenazic communities – though not becoming entirely separate from it until the modern era. Nurtured and maintained within the framework of the local Jewish corporative organization, the culture also served to unite widely dispersed Jewish communities.

Eastern European Jewish culture was characterized by clear gender-based distinctions: although men and women took part in a shared discourse, they partook in very different ways of the knowledge, values, and rituals that defined the Jewish life cycle and yearly cycle. Three prominent features marked the Jewish culture of the eastern branch of the Ashkenazic dispersion for hundreds of years, distinguishing it from other Jewish diasporas and erecting sharp boundaries between it and its non-Jewish host cultures:

1. The centrality of the talmudic text and rabbinic literature in the individual and group consciousness of the elite, and the intense influence of that literature on the community's social life.

[19] Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 13.

2. The persistence, despite the substantive changes it underwent, of the Ashkenazic heritage (which originated in communities within the Holy Roman Empire) as the culture of a group of migrants within the Slavic lands.
3. The bilingual nature of religious creativity, encompassing Hebrew (the holy tongue) and Yiddish – a bilingualism shared with other branches of the Ashkenazic dispersion yet unique in its development of an eastern European vernacular having ties to the Slavic linguistic environment.

During the sixteenth century, the intellectual elite living in several communities within the Commonwealth acquired senior standing within the overall Ashkenazic world with respect to the study of the talmudic text. Poland–Lithuania took the place of the earlier centers of Torah study in the German cities and became the new center of halakhic learning, whether measured by the number of students and scholarly institutions or by the intensity with which the talmudic text and commentaries on it were pursued. The methods of study exerted influence far beyond the boundaries of the Commonwealth, and the religious authority of the Polish–Lithuanian sages was recognized throughout the European communities.

The scholarly leadership of Polish-Jewish sages between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries went unchallenged in part because, until the second half of the eighteenth century, the spiritual and intellectual world of the men and women of the Jewish community faced no significant threat from the non-Jewish environment. The linguistic barrier and religious separation between Jews and the surrounding Christian society on the one hand, and the legal and organizational autonomy of the Jewish corporation on the other, allowed for the maintenance of a culturally separate existence in the cities and towns in which Jews and Christians lived side-by-side. Some cultural contact, of course, was inevitable, and we can point to influences exerted by the surrounding society on Jewish customs in such areas as language, attire, cuisine, folk medicine, architecture, crafts, and music. Jews were influenced more than a bit by the Polish aristocracy, some of whose customs they saw as models worthy of emulation, and they absorbed much from the folk cultures of the ethnic groups among which they lived.[20] But what is most evident is the fact that, for centuries, the Jews of Poland–Lithuania were exposed to the influences of European culture almost exclusively through Yiddish translations of works in Italian, disseminated throughout the Ashkenazic dispersion, while

[20] Yohanan Petrovsky-Stern, "Magic and Folk Medicine" [Hebrew], in Alexander Kulik, ed., *Toledot Yehude Rusiyah* [History of the Jews of Russia], vol. I (Jerusalem, 2010), 349–65.

remaining unaware of works written in Polish.[21] Even the efforts of some within the Catholic Church, primarily during the eighteenth century, to weaken the Jews' devotion to the basic values of their religious culture produced no substantial results. In many towns, Jews and Christians lived in close proximity and came into daily contact, and Jews were an inseparable part of the urban landscape, as recounted by travelers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and attested by contemporary paintings and drawings. But their inner cultural world remained a closed book to their neighbors, whatever their social class.

The text that occupied center-stage in Ashkenazic culture overall, and in the version of it that developed in Poland–Lithuania in early modern times in particular, was the Babylonian Talmud. Halakhah was the recognized law of the Jewish community, studied through ongoing exegesis of the Talmud and the layers of halakhic material added to it over the ages and applied to real-life situations under the guidance of the rabbi, the court, and the *kahal*. But the role played by the talmudic text in the cultural and social life of the male elite in Poland–Lithuania went far beyond religion and law, for the study, interpretation, and analysis of the text constituted the prevailing social ideal. Talmudic and rabbinic erudition afforded prestige beyond that afforded by lineage and economic status. Study on one's own or in the study hall, including argumentative analysis of the text, was the most favored and recommended masculine pastime. Boys' education began at the age of three, when they were introduced to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The ritual associated with the beginning of study in the *ḥeder* – the school for young boys – had considerable sociocultural significance. At the age of five, boys would begin to study the Pentateuch trilingually, in the original Hebrew and in Aramaic and Western Yiddish translation. At the age of eight, those who were qualified began to study the Talmud, entering the Gemara *ḥeder*. Students who excelled would enter the *yeshiva*, the institution of higher learning.

The modes of study and exegetical methods, as well as the social significance of engaging with the talmudic text, came to the Polish–Lithuanian communities from Ashkenaz, but new forms of study developed in eastern Europe. The principal mode of study was individual examination of the talmudic passage under consideration and commentaries on it (such as Rashi and Tosafot). In that way, the students prepared themselves for the class given by the head of the *yeshiva*, in which they would pose questions on the material they had studied and hear his

[21] On Yiddish literature in early modern times in its central and eastern European contexts, see Chone Shmeruk, *Sifrut Yiddish: Perakim le-Toledotehah* [Chapters in the History of Yiddish Literature] (Tel Aviv, 1978), 72–89.

responses and innovative interpretations – an inquiry that required considerable intellectual acuteness and generally ranged far afield from the plain meaning of the text.

The early Ashkenazic *yeshiva* was, in general, a private educational institution organized by its head. The fifteenth century saw an increase in the number of community *yeshivot* that became part of the array of autonomous Jewish institutions in Poland–Lithuania. By the middle of the sixteenth century, eastern Europe was home to a network of Torah-study centers unprecedented in its scope, while *yeshivot* in Germany numbered only a few. The *yeshivot* attracted skilled students from throughout the Commonwealth, and were analogous in that regard to the European universities. Also like the pre-modern university, the *yeshiva* was a corporation of teachers and students, established on the basis of a royal *privilegium* or by leave of some other authority. For example, the charter granted by Polish King Zygmunt August in 1567 to the Lublin Yeshiva, one of the first Polish *yeshivot*, includes wording similar to that in the charters of analogous contemporary Christian institutions:

> we hereby authorize them [the Jews] to establish, using communal funds, a yeshiva and a synagogue alongside it . . . its administration will be in the hands of a man enjoying authority and influence among its teachers and qualified to establish order and obedience among the students. All the sages and rabbis of Lublin shall join in its council and choose one of their number to be the head of the yeshiva . . . We hereby grant him the title of *rector* . . . and because instruction in this yeshiva must be offered at no charge, we grant it the privilege of exemption from all payments and taxes of all sorts . . . In witness whereof our seal is hereto affixed.[22]

Beginning in the sixteenth century, the community *yeshiva* became a power center apart from the *kahal*, while also serving as an important organ in the intercommunal federative structure that united the elite families throughout Poland–Lithuania.

The invention of printing and the spread of that new technology to the towns of eastern Europe during those same years advanced the consolidation of the Talmud's pre-eminence within Jewish society. The printing of individual tractates of the Talmud made the text available to thousands of students even at the initial stages of study. In 1559 – two years after the founding of the Lublin Yeshiva – the first talmudic tractate printed in Poland was published in that city. Until the Cossack rebellion of 1648, various talmudic tractates were repeatedly published in Lublin and Krakow, attesting to the growing demand for materials for instruction and self-study. The widespread dissemination of printed editions of the

[22] Cited from Israel Halpern, ed., *Beit Yisra'el be-Polin*, vol. II (Jerusalem, 1953), 239.

Talmud throughout Poland–Lithuania coincided with the beginning, in Counter-Reformation Italy, of its systematic destruction, along with that of its commentaries and associated discourses. In 1559, the Talmud was added to the Catholic Church's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, a list of books subject to censorship, whose reading was forbidden as harmful to the faith. The centers of Jewish printing that had published rabbinic texts migrated from Italy to the eastern and southern borders of Europe – Poland–Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire, in which a large majority of the world's Jews resided in the early modern period. In that way, communities at the margins of the European continent, including those within the eastern areas of the Ashkenazic Jewish world, became centers for religious-cultural preservation and renewal that would clash, in the ensuing years, with western European cultural influences. Thanks to the availability of printing, the halakhic literature that took shape within those communities quickly spread throughout the Jewish diaspora.

In those same years, the literature of Jewish mysticism – that is, Lurianic Kabbalah – also began to circulate more widely, making its way to eastern Europe, via Italy, from the important kabbalistic center in Safed. The eastern European communities of the seventeenth century saw the emergence, alongside the talmudic and halakhic elite, of a parallel elite engaged in kabbalistic study. The latter exercised a growing influence over religious life throughout society, paving the way for the appearance of a messianic movement and various mystical streams that gained strength during the eighteenth century.

In his apologetic tract *Discorso circa il stato de gl'Hebrei*, published in Venice in 1638, the Italian rabbi Simone Luzzatto wrote that

> a large number of Jews live in Germany, under the Emperor's rule, but the number of Jews in Poland, Russia, and Lithuania is even larger. In the *yeshiva* and study halls there, thousands of young men diligently pursue the study of the Jews' civil and religious laws, for in those lands, they have the authority to adjudicate all internecine disputes and quarrel, both monetary and penal.[23]

These comments by the Venetian rabbi convey the image held in Europe of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry during the first half of the seventeenth century – a populous community enjoying broad legal autonomy and maintaining a system of higher education providing talmudic training to thousands of men. A similarly idealized self-image was held by an eastern European scholar, Nathan Hannover, who fled the kingdom of Poland during the

[23] Simḥah Luzzatto, *Ma'amar al Yehudei Veneziyah* [Essay on the Venetian Jews] (Jerusalem, 1951).

massacres of 1648–9 and memorialized the cultural world he had left behind him. Hannover wrote to similar effect in *Yeven Metsulah* [Abyss of Despair], his chronicle of the massacres in Ukraine at that time:

> for throughout the dispersions of Israel there was nowhere so much learning as in the Kingdom of Poland ... There was scarcely a house in all the kingdom of Poland where its members did not occupy themselves with the study of the Torah. Either the head of the family was himself a scholar, or else his son, or his son-in-law studies, or one of the young men eating at his table. At times, all of these were to be found in one house.[24]

But mastery of the talmudic text was the province of a relatively narrow social class, comprising mainly the sons of wealthy and distinguished families in the towns of the Commonwealth. These scholars studied at the *yeshiva*, served in rabbinic positions, or joined a *kloiz*, a group that met regularly for intensive study and was supported by the *kahal* or by wealthy donors (often family members). Members of the broader, lower classes were almost entirely precluded from reading halakhic literature. Nevertheless, talmudic discourse and modes of study and the language of textual analysis (a trilingual process involving reading in the sacred tongues of Hebrew or Aramaic and oral translation into Yiddish) permeated society as a whole, influenced the spoken language, and shaped behavior. Between the class of professional scholars, who excelled in exegesis and propounded novellae, and the class of those who lacked any ability to study the talmudic text, there was a significant sociocultural group of "students." These were men who had received talmudic training but continued their studies while engaging in other pursuits. Although earning a living through crafts or commerce, they studied on their own throughout their lives, either in their homes or in the communal study hall.

With only a few exceptions, women lacked access to the talmudic text and took no part in the sociocultural structure that developed around it. Instead, they partook of their own cultural resources. Prayer and charity were seen as an inseparable part of feminine religious activity, while Torah study was regarded as a masculine pursuit in which women had no role to play. Women's schooling was primarily informal, and they acquired most of their education from their mothers. They had only limited ability to read Hebrew, but many of them mastered Yiddish. Their religious world was grounded in a literary corpus parallel to the talmudic–halakhic texts that stood at the center of masculine cultural discourse. Most of it was written in the Western dialect of Yiddish, which differed from the eastern

[24] Nathan Nata Hannover, *Abyss of Despair*, trans. Abraham J. Mesch (New York, 1950), 110–11.

European dialects that served as the spoken vernacular. These texts, some of them meant as well for men who were not part of the scholarly elite, included a large selection of homiletic and ethical works as well as texts pertaining to the three principal religious commandments particularly associated with Jewish women – *hallah* (separating a portion of the dough before baking a batch of bread), family purity, and Sabbath candles. The best-known book in that literature was called *Ẓe'enah u-re'enah* [Go Forth and Gaze], an allusion to Song of Songs 3:11. In their leisure time, women also read stories and some works that had been translated from Italian into Yiddish.[25]

DIFFERENTIATION AND SURVIVAL

The early modern Jewish community in Poland, as an ethnic and social-echelon corporation with its own religion, was not inherently unusual in the feudal context, though it stood out in its numbers and its dispersion throughout all areas of the Polish–Lithuanian state. From a legal and political perspective, the Jews were just another of the corporative groups with unique religious identity, like the Armenians and the Scots who lived in the towns of Poland. Their rights and obligations, including, as noted earlier, the freedom to carry out the requirements of their religion and to be judged according to Halakhah, were grounded in the *privilegia* that had been renewed from time to time over the course of hundreds of years. But the Jewish religion, with all its significance in the Christian spiritual world and in Christian ritual and custom, always accentuated their distinctiveness.

The Jews' quotidian existence within the Christian environment invoked global theological questions rooted in ancient times and in places far beyond the borders of Poland–Lithuania. The Talmud – the core of the Jews' inner spiritual life and the grounding for their behavior at home and in the marketplace – was seen by Christians as the great barrier to the nonbelievers' acceptance of the true faith. On the one hand, the Jews' existence within Christian society was tolerated on the basis of the Augustinian pronouncement that they served as definitive witness to the soundness of the principles of Christian faith; on the other hand, and on the basis of the same concept, they were treated as a constant object of discrimination and as perpetual targets for efforts to promote conversion. The tension-laden religious dialogue between Jews and Christians went on in the daily life of every city and town, given the close proximity of the

[25] Yemimah Hovav, *Alamot Ahevukha: Hayye ha-Dat ve-ha-Ruah shel Nashim ba-Hevrah ha-Ashkenazit be-Re'shit ha-Et ha-Hadashah* [Women's Religious and Spiritual Life in Early Modern Ashkenazic Society] (Jerusalem, 2009), 443–5.

communities (in many of which church and synagogue were situated next to each other) and the strong economic ties between Jews and their neighbors in city, town, and village. The policy of the Catholic Church toward the Jews was ambivalent: many in the hierarchy were openly hostile to them but others tended to moderate that hostility and sought to restrain harsh outbursts of anti-Jewish feelings on the part of believers, such as the violent attacks often provoked by Christian ceremonies carried on in streets where Jews resided. The institutions of the Polish Catholic Church had no interest in harming Jews in the socio-economic sphere, for the Jewish communities borrowed funds from the Christian institutions, including the Jesuit colleges, and were an important source of income.[26]

The Jewish communities were constantly required to maneuver among the various forces in the non-Jewish environment in order to maintain their rights and avoid being harmed by religious clashes. During the eighteenth century, the *kahal* and the *va'ad* were often helped by the local Polish magnate, who in many instances promoted the welfare of his proprietary town (by becoming involved in the internal affairs of the local *kahal*) at the expense of his support for the Church officials who sought to limit the Jews' activities. At times, personnel and organizations within the Catholic Church helped the Jews to frustrate the hostile intentions of other forces within the Church structure. Efforts of that sort often went beyond the local or regional arena and relied on a country-wide or even international network that united communities in Poland–Lithuania with those in Italy, France, and England. Intercessors on behalf of communities that had been harmed by particular bishops' anti-Jewish measures used their connections to the nobility and to people in the royal court in Warsaw to frustrate those hostile intentions. At times, in cases involving blood libel trials, they were helped by wealthy Court Jews, by their coreligionists in neighboring kingdoms, and by communities in western Europe, who lobbied the Holy See in Rome to condemn the libels and moderate the aggressive anti-Jewish activity of a limited number of Polish churchmen.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the international network of supplicants who combatted blood libels encompassed Poland, the German states, Holland, France, England, and Italy. In 1753, several dozen Jews were imprisoned, charged with the murder for ritual purposes of the son of a Polish nobleman in the town of Pawołocz, near Zhitomir in Ukraine.

[26] Judith Kalik, "Patterns of Contact between the Catholic Church and the Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: The Jewish Debts," in A. Teller, ed., *Studies in the History of the Jews in Old Poland in Honor of Jacob Goldberg*, Scripta Hierosolymitana 38 (Jerusalem, 1998), 102–22.

Bishop Kajetan Soltyk of Kiev orchestrated the trial, in whose wake eleven Jews were killed – six through horrendous torture, and five, who agreed to convert to Christianity, by beheading.[27] Three years later, Jews from the town of Jampol, near Łuck, also in Ukraine, were accused of murdering a Christian boy whose body was found in a river. Here, too, the Catholic bishop, Antoni Wollowicz, was involved. The Council of the Four Lands authorized an emissary, Elyakim ben Asher Zelig, to journey to Rome and attempt to gain the Papal Court's defense against Polish charges of ritual murder. Meanwhile, the *shtadlan* for the Council of the Four Lands, the rich financier Barukh Ben David Yavan, used his good relations with minister Bruhl, the most powerful figure in the court of Polish King August III, and attempted to enlist the help of the Papal Nuncio in Poland, Nicolai Serra.[28] All this took place concurrently with the clash, during the 1750s and 1760s, between representatives of the Polish–Lithuanian communities and the followers of the mystic Jacob Frank. The latter exploited the blood libels and cooperated with figures in the Catholic Church who sought to prove substantively that the Jewish religion required its adherents to make ritual use of Christian blood.

The mission to Rome and the intercession with the Papal Nuncio in Warsaw, which the sources show imposed huge costs, ultimately yielded a papal document declaring that there was no basis for accusing Jews of murder for ritual purposes. The document, which put an end to the wave of blood libels that had swept through the kingdom since the early eighteenth century, was issued in print and disseminated through Jewish initiatives. This episode, in which the Jewish supplicants made wise use of the internal differences within the Church, shows the nature of premodern Jewish political power.[29] In the context of the noblemen's republic that emerged in the early modern period, in which opposition to Jewish economic power developed and religious positions calling for the curtailment of Jewish–Christian contacts became more powerful, the agents of the Jewish corporate entity successfully harnessed to their cause various

[27] Hayyim Bordiansky, "The Pawołocz Libel" [Hebrew], in *'Eder ha-Yakar, divre Sifrut u-Meḥkar Mukdashim li-Khevod Shemu'el Abba Horodezki bi-Melo't lo Shiv`im ve-Hamesh Shanah* [Literary and Scholarly Essays in Honor of Shmuel Abba Horodtesky on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday] (Tel Aviv, 1947), 172–83.

[28] See Pawel Macejko, *The Mixed Multitude, Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816* (Philadelphia, 2011), 113–26.

[29] Israel Bartal, "Pre-Modern Jewish Politics: The 'Councils of the Lands' in Eastern Europe" [Hebrew], in Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Moshe Lisak, eds., *Ha-Ziyonut ve-ha-Hazarah la-Historiyah – he-Ha`arakhah me-Hadash* [Zionism and the Return to History – A New Assessment] (Jerusalem, 1999), 186–94.

local and international agents that curbed, time and again, the influence of Catholic religious extremism.

FROM "POLISH JEWS" TO "EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWS"

At the end of the eighteenth century, Polish Jewry was a traditional society that maintained its distinctive religion, culture, leadership, and institutions within the political, legal, and economic frameworks of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. A complex and multi-faceted system of *privilegia* that had developed over generations defined their rights and obligations and set a firm basis for the autonomous communal governance that continued to exist in the eastern parts of Poland–Lithuania for several decades following the partitions. One clearly sees the continuity of the traditional systems over a period of some 500 years in the ratifications of the Jewish communities' *privilegia* during the reign of the last Polish king, some of them just before the Second Partition of Poland. Moreover, as late as during the first half of the nineteenth century, some *privilegia* from earlier centuries were ratified, representing another manifestation of the persistence of the "old order" into the multinational empires of modern times.[30]

The corporative social order in which Jewish communal autonomy existed not only posed no threat to the continuity of the way of life of the Jewish community, it also clearly set, albeit in ways that varied with time and place, the limits of external non-Jewish involvement in the internal affairs of the community. Even when members of the Polish nobility sought to intervene more actively in the internal affairs of the community within one of the towns they owned, they never challenged the independent existence of the *kahal*. The intracommunal social forces that competed for dominance and status never sought to abolish the organization as well. For example, when the Hasidim in the Vilna community, at the beginning of Russian rule, gained the upper hand over their opponents (1798–1800), they did not abolish the *kahal*. Instead, they secured the backing of the Russian administration and appointed communal officials from among their supporters.[31]

[30] Jacob Goldberg, *Jewish Privileges in the Polish Commonwealth: Charters of Rights Granted to Jewish Communities in Poland–Lithuania in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, vol. I (Jerusalem, 1985), 40–6.

[31] Israel Klausner, *Vilna, Yerushalayim de-Lita, 1495–1881* [Vilna, Jerusalem of Lithuania, 1495–1881] (Lohame Ha-Geta'ot, 1988), 119–24. On the integration of the new religious movement into the long-established Jewish autonomous structure, see Shmuel Ettinger, "Hasidism and the *Kahal* in Eastern Europe," in Ada Rapoport-Albert, ed., *Hasidism Reappraised* (London, 1998), 63–75.

A more palpable threat to the Jewish way of life in early modern times was posed by the growing power of absolutist regimes in central and eastern Europe. The political and social changes that altered the face of Europe during the eighteenth century began to exercise more and more influence on the Jewish community in Poland–Lithuania. The three kingdoms that surrounded Poland – Prussia to the west and northwest, Austria to the south, and the Russian Empire to the east – became stronger politically and militarily, and intervened more and more in Poland's internal affairs. The centralization of power in the neighboring states vitiated the strength of the corporative entities within them and hastened the integration of the various estates into the central government's administrative systems.

The Jewish communities in central Europe, which had been part of the Ashkenazic socio-economic network and had maintained a multi-faceted array of ties with their counterparts in Poland–Lithuania, likewise were gradually exposed to greater involvement on the part of the central government, and their autonomous leadership sooner or later came under a more direct supervision by government officials. The tendency to centralize was joined to the enlightened European ideas adopted by the rulers of Prussia, Austria, and Russia, and the blend of strong central government and modern socio-economic ideas in vogue among rulers and administrative personnel in the central and eastern European kingdoms eventually made its way to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth as well, where it hastened the demise of the traditional way of life of eastern European Jews. The language of Ashkenazic Jews (Yiddish), their distinctive culture (exclusive attention to the Talmud and the Zohar), the moral underpinnings of their behavior (isolation and dislike of outsiders), their communal organization (the *kahal*), and their economic activities (lacking in productivity) were all seen, in the age of enlightened absolutism, as hostile to the desired political order and as contrary to the good of the state. The Polish Jew who maintained his traditional way of life as he had lived it under the rule of the *kahal* appeared to the reformers working for states partitioning Poland as a clear manifestation of all these evils. The winds of modernity wafting through eastern Europe, first under the influence of the intellectual and political changes in the neighboring countries and later with the annexation of extensive parts of Poland by one or another of the three partitioning powers, began to weaken the foundations of Jewish society. The face of that society, along with its institutions of self-rule, its spiritual world, its way of life and customs – all of them created and crystallized in the Polish–Lithuanian republic of early modern times – was fated to be erased and redesigned as part of the process by which Jews were integrated into society as subjects of the centralized state.

Immediately after the First Partition of Poland in 1772, conflict arose between the Jewish corporations, whose existence was grounded in *privilegia* granted by the Polish royalty and nobility, and the government of the centralized state. In the areas of northwestern Poland annexed by Prussia following the First Partition, the Jewish Law enacted in Prussia in 1750 was applied. Austria, which in 1772 annexed large parts of southeastern Poland, established within it a new administrative entity called Galizien (Galicia). At that time, more than 200,000 Jews lived in Galicia, and Emperor Joseph II (who had already been active in the region during the reign of his mother, Empress Maria Theresa) applied to the Jews within those new areas the ideas of amelioration that he hoped to realize throughout the Habsburg Empire. In addition, he enforced a set of reforms in the spirit of enlightened absolutism that were meant to bring the Jews under the government's direct control, to "improve" their economic activities, and to educate them with an eye toward changing their way of life. In 1785, the communities lost their autonomy, and in 1789, the *Toleranzpatent* ("Edict of Tolerance") for the Jews of Galicia was issued as a sort of summary of the new legislation. Meanwhile, in the areas annexed to the Russian Empire beginning in 1772, the Empress Catherine II instituted a new system of provincial administration and the Charter of the Towns that was introduced between 1775 and 1782. At the same time, she guaranteed the rights of the various social estates, including those of the Polish nobility, who pledged loyalty to the new government, and she expanded the authority of towns' councils. The *kahal* was granted official recognition and integrated into the imperial administration. Simultaneously, the Jews were also permitted to participate in electing, and to be elected as, members of the municipal councils, and to enjoy rights identical to those of Christian burghers.[32]

Jewish autonomy thus was not canceled in the areas annexed to Russia; instead, it continued to exist, with official recognition and in cooperation with the imperial administration, until the *kahal* was abolished in 1844, during the reign of Tsar Nicholas I. Efforts directed toward strengthening the central government in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth did not proceed at the same pace as those in the three neighboring kingdoms. The communal autonomy was defended by the Polish magnates, who protected the *kahal* in the towns they owned but simultaneously intervened more and more in their internal affairs. Only during the reign of the last Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski (1764–95), were reforms introduced in

[32] Richard Pipes, "Catherine II and the Jews," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 5, 2 (1975), 3–20. Pipes saw the policies of Catherine the Great toward the Jews as a clear manifestation of Enlightenment and, to a considerable extent, as heralding the emancipation of the Jews.

the Commonwealth that had a substantial effect on the Jewish community as well. The abolition of the Council of the Four Lands in 1764 and of the Council of the Land of Lithuania in 1765, at the start of his reign, represented important steps toward integrating the Jewish corporative system into the state's administrative system.

In 1788–91, a time when efforts were being made to reconstitute Poland's political, social, and economic shape by proposing a new constitution for the Commonwealth, the Sejm in Warsaw gave intensive consideration to the status of the Jews. It was suggested, among other things, that the separate corporate existence of the Jews be terminated and they be legally integrated into the Polish bourgeois class. Among the suggested measures for achieving that purpose were provisions, on the model of those imposed at the time in the neighboring kingdoms, requiring Jews to alter their traditional attire; integrating them into Polish schools; ending the recognition of Halakhah as a separate legal system for them; and prohibiting them from engaging in their traditional occupations (mainly the production and distribution of alcoholic beverages, and leasing property and means of production in towns and on the estates of the nobility). On May 3, 1791, a new constitution was proclaimed, but it did not enact any of these plans for changing the Jews' status. And with the loss of Polish independence four years later, the radical changes envisioned by the Polish reformers in the traditional way of life of Polish–Lithuanian Jews were deferred for decades in most areas of eastern Europe. The amelioration programs considered during the time of the "Four-Year Sejm" reverberated in the similar discussions that took place early in the reign of Tsar Alexander I and ultimately led to the Russian "Jewish Statute" of 1804. They arose again in connection with the reforms enacted in Poland at the end of the Napoleonic era. The partition of Poland among the three surrounding powers was completed, as a practical matter, at the end of the Napoleonic wars in Europe. The Congress of Vienna (1815), at which the representatives of the victorious states established the European political boundaries, redrew the map of partitioned Poland. The Duchy of Warsaw, a political unit created by Napoleon, was abolished and replaced by a Kingdom of Poland, known also as Congress Poland.[33] The process effectively set the boundaries of eastern European Jewry, boundaries that persisted, with only relatively minor changes, until the First World War.

[33] For a detailed account of efforts by the Jews to revive their communal autonomy during the time of the Duchy of Warsaw, see Arthur Eisenbach, "The Central Representation of the Jews in the Principality of Warsaw" [Hebrew], in Bartal and Guttmann, eds., *Kiyum va-Shever*, 287–314.

After 1772, the Jewry of the former Polish–Lithuanian kingdom no longer found itself within a single political unit. The social, economic, and cultural changes visited upon the Jews of eastern Europe in their encounter with the influences of modern times were dictated, to a considerable extent, by the policies of the three kingdoms – Prussia, Russia, and Austria – and differed among them. That said, there continued to be sociocultural traits common to all the Jews of Poland–Lithuania, traits that transcended the new political boundaries. A striking example of the uniformity of eastern European Jewry is the series of reactions in partitioned Poland to the policies of mandatory "amelioration" promulgated after partition by the Prussian, Austrian, and Russian governments, reactions that took the form of "panic marriages." Even before the First Partition, early in the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski, Jews were concerned that the government might impose limitations on marriages in order to cut the birth rate; to frustrate any such effort, they married off large numbers of boys and girls. They did so again in Galicia, around the time of the Austrian annexation of the region; in Prussia after the Third Partition; and in Russia early in the reign of Tsar Nicholas I. Describing this type of reaction to the reforms in traditional society that the centralized states sought to achieve, Israel Halpern nicely observed that:

> What appears before us is the Jewish society in Poland and what was formerly Poland, at odds with itself and divided among three kingdoms, nevertheless acting as a single, living body. Each of its limbs responds and responds again, reflexively and in the same manner, to any attempt to impair its traditional way of life and values. And so, if further evidence were needed for the continuity of traditional society in Eastern Europe during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and even during the first half of the nineteenth, the phenomenon of "panic marriages" would provide it as persuasively as one hundred witnesses.[34]

Another manifestation of the post-partition unity of eastern European Jewry is the spread throughout the region of each of the rival movements that were locked in competition through most of the nineteenth century – Hasidism and Haskalah. Hasidism, a new religious movement that appeared during the final years of the independent Polish kingdom, spread quickly throughout eastern Europe, unimpeded by the political boundaries that were set between 1772 and 1795 and separated Jewish communities from one another. Hasidim on one side of a political boundary might be followers of a *rebbe* whose court was on the other side. Hasidic books were distributed

[34] Israel Halpern, "Panic Marriages in Eastern Europe" [Hebrew], in Halpern, *Chapters in the History of Jews and Judaism in Eastern Europe* [*Yehudim ve-Yahadut be-Mizrah Eropah: Perakim be-Toledotehem*] (Jerusalem, 1969), 309.

throughout partitioned Poland, and the rabbinic elite in the various regions of partitioned Poland–Lithuania continued to arrange marriages between their families even after the new political boundaries were drawn. Halakhic responsa likewise crossed the border between the Austrian Kingdom and the Russian Empire. Similarly, the Haskalah movement began to bloom in Austrian Galicia, in Lithuania in the Russian Empire, and in Congress Poland, and the new cultural movement's activists maintained intellectual and literary ties. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Polish–Lithuanian Jews of the early modern period, members of an ethnic-religious corporation, gradually became Austrian Jews, Russian Jews, and Prussian Jews (later, German Jews). In modern times, they no longer lived in a single political unit, and their linguistic-cultural identity became fragmented, proceeding along diverse paths. But the geopolitical fragmentation did not bring about total separation, and vibrant links were maintained among the various groups – links that carried on the social, linguistic, and cultural heritage that took shape at the end of the early modern period. This heritage was maintained for decades after the radical changes in the political, social, and economic conditions in which the Polish–Lithuanian Jewish community had been formed and developed, and that continuity served as the basis for the emergence of a modern Jewish entity, primarily a voluntary one, which replaced the pre-modern ethno-religious corporation.

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CHAPTER 9

LINGUISTIC TRANSFORMATIONS
Ladino (Judeo-Spanish)

MATTHIAS B. LEHMANN

Writing in the early seventeenth century, the Spanish historian Gonzalo de Illescas noted in his monumental *Historia pontifical y católica* that many of the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492

> moved to Constantinople, Salonika (or Thessaloniki), Cairo, and to Barbary [the Maghreb]. They took with them our language, and they still keep it, and readily use it. And the fact is that in the cities of Salonika, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Cairo, and in other cities of trade, and in Venice, they buy, sell, and negotiate in no language other than Spanish. I knew in Venice plenty of Jews from Salonika, who, though quite young, spoke Castilian as well as or better than I do.[1]

Throughout the Mediterranean basin, Sephardim – Jews who had left the Iberian Peninsula behind following the widespread violence of 1391, the expulsion of 1492, and the onslaught of the Inquisition, as well as their descendants – continued to use varieties of Judeo-Spanish for centuries, referred to as *Ladino, Judezmo*, or simply *Español* in the Ottoman lands and as *Hakitía* in northern Morocco. Judeo-Spanish served as a lingua franca in much of the eastern Sephardic Diaspora, with the heartland of Ladino culture emerging in the Ottoman Balkans and Asia Minor, and with pockets of Judeo-Spanish-speaking communities throughout the Ottoman Middle East and in North Africa.

Prior to the expulsion of 1492, the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula spoke varieties of Ibero-Romance – Castilian, Catalan, Aragonese, Galician, Portuguese – though there is still some debate among scholars as to whether there existed distinctly "Jewish" forms of Ibero-Romance. Since all scholars handle the same limited amount of evidence, the debate is largely a matter of the always elusive definition of what makes the variety of a language "Jewish," or whether one wishes to label any given variety a "language," "dialect," or "sociolect."[2] Laura Minervini, for one, has studied

[1] Gonzalo de Illescas, *Segunda parte de la historia pontifical y católica* (Barcelona, 1622), 109b.

[2] Elaine Miller, "The Debate over Pre-Expulsion Judeo-Spanish: Status Quaestionis," in David Bunis, ed., *Languages and Literatures of Sephardic and Oriental Jews* (Jerusalem,

the medieval Romance texts that are available to us – Castilian, Aragonese, and Navarrese – and which were written, as were Jewish texts in many languages and just about everywhere, in Hebrew script, or *aljamiado*.[3] The language of these texts – including the community ordinances of Tudela (1305), Puente de la Reina (1343), and Valladolid (1432), notary documents, and literary works such as *Proverbios morales* by Shem Tov de Carrión (fourteenth century) or the anonymous *Coplas de Yoçef* (fifteenth century) – is generally not much different from the corresponding regional varieties used in texts written by Christians. The main difference is lexical, namely the use of Hebraisms, Arabisms (*alhad*, instead of *Domingo*, for "Sunday"), or of words such as *meldar* ("read, learn"), or *Dio*, instead of *Dios* ("God").[4]

Many of the Jewish exiles, following the expulsion from Castile and Aragon in 1492 (and from Navarre in 1498), found refuge in the cities of the Ottoman Empire. They were joined by *conversos* – those Jews who had converted to Christianity in large numbers ever since the wave of persecutions that swept Spain in 1391, as a result of the Edict of Expulsion in 1492, and those who were forcibly baptized in Portugal in 1497 – escaping the Portuguese and Spanish Inquisitions. Thus, the Ottoman lands developed into a major cultural and demographic center of Jewish life in the early modern period. Sephardic Jews also established themselves across North Africa, especially in Morocco, and by the late sixteenth century, new avenues of migration led many of the Portuguese *conversos* to western Europe, from Bordeaux to Amsterdam, London, and Hamburg, and eventually across the Atlantic to the Caribbean and the Americas. Italy, in the meantime, served as a place of encounter between "old" Sephardim who had left Spain in 1492 and Portuguese *conversos* who arrived from the late sixteenth century onwards.

The western Sephardim, largely of Portuguese *converso* origin, maintained closer ties with their former homelands and continued to use Portuguese (as a spoken language, but also for community records and literature) and Castilian (mainly as a literary language and for translating sacred texts, namely the Bible or the prayer book), writing both in Latin script. By contrast, among the communities of Sephardim in the eastern

2008), 167–87. For a critique of the concept of "language" vs. "dialect" see Ralph Penny, *Variation and Change in Spanish* (Cambridge, 2000), 9–36. See also Ora (Rodrigue) Schwartzwald, "Judaeo-Spanish Studies," in Martin Goodman, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (Oxford, 2002), 572–600.

[3] The term generally refers to Romance texts in Hebrew characters.

[4] Laura Minervini, *Testi guideospagnoli medievali*, 2 vols. (Naples, 1992); Minervini, "El desarrollo histórico del judeoespañol," *Revista internacional de lingüística iberoamericana* 4 (2006), 13–34. See also David Bunis, "Distinctive Characteristics of Jewish Ibero-Romance, circa 1492," *Hispania Judaica* 4 (2004), 108–10.

Mediterranean, a distinct Judeo-Spanish *koiné*, or common language, developed in the generations following the expulsion, severed from linguistic developments on the Iberian Peninsula. Emerging as the language of intercommunal communication in a context where congregations of Jews from Castile, Catalonia, and Aragon coexisted in close proximity, the Judeo-Spanish *koiné* gradually superseded other Ibero-Romance varieties. At the same time, in addition to the Hebraisms and Arabisms from the pre-expulsion period, there was now an influence – in particular on the lexicon – from the languages spoken in the new homelands of the Sephardic Diaspora, for example Turkish and Greek. Far from being a fossilized or archaic remnant of fifteenth-century Castilian, as it is sometimes mistakenly described, Judeo-Spanish displayed "a considerable degree of innovation, especially in phonology and lexis," as Ralph Penny has observed. The "dialect mixing" involved in the emergence of the Judeo-Spanish language of the eastern Mediterranean led to linguistic simplification, as is typical of such processes, and to a "leveling of differences between competing varieties." Castilian features were by no means always favored and those from non-Castilian variants were selected more frequently than was the case in the development of American Spanish.[5] Over time, regional forms of Judeo-Spanish emerged in the Ottoman lands, with the Ladino of Salonika, for example, displaying differences from the Ladino spoken in Constantinople or Izmir.[6]

Both in the Ottoman Empire and in northern Morocco, a rich Judeo-Spanish oral literature developed.[7] Judeo-Spanish ballads, or *romances*, have long attracted the interest of researchers, who were intrigued by the persistence of medieval Spanish traditions among the Sephardim of the post-expulsion Diaspora.[8] As has been amply documented in the works of Samuel Armistead, Joseph Silverman, and others, parts of the Sephardic *romancero* can indeed be traced back to medieval Iberian sources, whereas other ballads were created by the Sephardim themselves, reached them from the Iberian peninsula after 1492, or were adapted from the folk traditions of the various non-Jewish contexts of the Sephardic Diaspora – for example Greek, Turkish, or pan-Balkanic traditions in the case of the Ottoman Empire. The same is true of other genres of Judeo-Spanish oral culture,

[5] Penny, *Variation and Change*, 174–93.

[6] Aldina Quintana, "Evolución del judeoespañol en el siglo XVII," *Neue Romania* 35 (2006), 157–81.

[7] For an overview of Sephardic oral literature, see Samuel Armistead, "La littérature orale des juifs séfarades," *Cahiers de littérature orale* 44 (1998), 93–122. An English version is available on the enormously useful website www.sephardifolklit.org.

[8] See, for example, Ramón Menéndez-Pidal, *Estudios sobre el Romancero* (Madrid, 1973); Paul Benichou, *Romancero judeo-español de Marruecos* (Madrid, 1968).

such as folktales[9] or proverbs.[10] Most of these traditions have only been collected since the Second World War, to be sure, but a few sources date back to the early modern period, such as, for example, the *incipits* in collections of Hebrew *piyyutim* (liturgical lyrical compositions) from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[11]

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY: EDUCATING THE *CONVERSOS*

In the sixteenth century, works published in Ladino were mostly intended for an audience of former *conversos*, reintroducing them to the teachings and life of Judaism. *Conversos* continued to arrive in the cities of the eastern Mediterranean throughout the century, whereas places in northwestern Europe and Italy became more popular destinations for the *converso* émigrés in the seventeenth century. Among the most important publications in the sixteenth-century Sephardic Diaspora were the Spanish translations of the Bible that catered to reading audiences in the west (the Bible of Ferrara, in Latin characters, in 1553) and in the east (the translation of the Pentateuch and the weekly readings from the prophets with Ladino and Greek translations, in Hebrew characters, that appeared in Constantinople in 1547; a Ladino translation of the Psalms was printed in the same city in 1540, and translations of the Prophets and Writings in Salonika in the 1560s and 1580s). The close affinity between the Ferrara and Constantinople versions and their common relation to a pre-expulsion tradition of Romance Bible translations are a clear testimony to the lines of continuity that linked Hispano-Jewish culture across the rupture of 1492 and across the divide between Sephardic communities in the west and those in the eastern Mediterranean.[12]

As the title page of the Ferrara Bible indicated, it was intended as a translation of the biblical text "palabra por palabra de la verdad hebrayica" – that is, a literal "word-for-word" translation based on the

[9] Tamar Alexander, *The Heart is a Mirror: The Sephardic Folktale* (Detroit, 2008); Reginetta Haboucha, *Types and Motifs of the Judeo-Spanish Folktales* (New York, 1992).

[10] Tamar Alexander, *Words are Better than Bread: A Study of the Judeo-Spanish Proverb* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2004); Tamar Alexander and Yaakov Bentolila, eds., *La palabra en su hora es oro: el refrán judeo-español del Norte de Marruecos* [Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish] (Jerusalem, 2008).

[11] Armistead, "Littérature," 98.

[12] Moshe Lazar, "Ladinando la Biblia entre los sefardíes mediterráneos: Italia, Imperio Otomano y Viena," in Iacob M. Hassán, ed., *Introducción a la Biblia de Ferrara* (Madrid, 1994), 347–72; Lazar, "The Judeo-Spanish Translations of the Bible" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 8 (1964), 337–75.

masoretic text and closely following the rabbinic exegetical tradition. Already in the pre-expulsion period, Jewish Romance translations of the Bible had differed from Christian versions, which followed the Latin Vulgate, and the Ferrara Bible in particular was not only designed for a Jewish audience but also intended as a proselytizing text directed at *conversos*, some of whom were reluctant to abandon their Catholic affiliation and re-embrace Judaism.[13] Some scholars, in particular Haim Vidal Séphiha, have dubbed these "calque" translations, which mimic the original Hebrew in a verbatim translation that emulates the original language as closely as possible. Séphiha, in fact, went a step farther and insisted that it was the peculiar language of these word-for-word translations – and only this language – which should properly be called "Ladino," and he distinguished this from the Judeo-Spanish vernacular used in oral communication and free literary creation.[14] Several scholars have challenged this proposition, however, and a distinction between Ladino as the language of "calque" translations and the Judeo-Spanish vernacular seems overly rigid and artificial.[15]

The earliest Ladino work printed in the Ottoman Empire was a compendium of the laws of ritual slaughter, *Dinim de Shehita y Bediqa* (Constantinople, 1510), followed later in the sixteenth century by other guides to Jewish law, namely the translation of portions from Joseph Karo's law code *Shulḥan Arukh* under the title *Mesa de la alma*, published first in Salonika in 1568 – only three years after the Hebrew original was first printed in Venice. One of the all-time favorites of Jewish ethical literature, Bahya ibn Paquda's eleventh-century *Hovat ha-Levavot*, was published in Ladino translation in Constantinople in 1569, as *Obligación de los corazones*. A number of original works were written in Ladino in the Ottoman Empire in the course of the sixteenth century, most intended for an audience of former *conversos*. One of these works was the anonymous book *Fuente clara*, an anti-Christian polemic written in the late sixteenth century and printed in Salonika, probably around 1595 (and again in Constantinople in 1740).[16] At the same time, it should be noted, some works were also translated from Spanish into Hebrew, for example Jacob

[13] Moisés Orfali, "Contexto teológico y social de la *Biblia de Ferrara*," in Hassán, ed., *Introducción*, 229–49.

[14] Haim Vidal Séphiha, *Le Ladino, judéo-espagnol calque* (Paris, 1973).

[15] For example, Iacob M. Hassán, "El español sefardí (judeoespañol, ladino)," in Manuel Seco and Gregorio Salvador, eds., *La lengua española, hoy* (Madrid, 1995), 117–40. Séphiha's distinction is still repeated faithfully (and somewhat dogmatically) by many, however.

[16] Pilar Romeu Ferré, ed., *Fuente clara (Salónica, 1595): un converso sefardí a la defensa del judaísmo y a la búsqueda de su propia fe* (Barcelona, 2007).

ben Moshe de Algava's Hebrew version of *Amadís de Gaula*, which appeared in Constantinople in 1539.[17]

One of the most notable representatives of the vibrant intellectual atmosphere – what Yosef Yahalom has called a "Hebrew Renaissance"[18] – in the Ottoman Sephardic diaspora of the sixteenth century was Rabbi Moshe Almosnino of Salonika (1518 – *c.* 1581).[19] Almosnino was a prominent leader of what he himself calls in one text the "Republic" of Sephardic Salonika, and he was a prolific author in Hebrew as well as in Judeo-Spanish. His oeuvre encompasses sermons, commentaries on the Pentateuch and on the prayer book, as well as a number of works on science – for example, a translation of Georg von Peurbach's astronomical work *Theoricae novae planetarum*. Among his most significant contributions are his writings on moral philosophy, in particular his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* – entitled *Pnei Moshe* – a work that Hava Tirosh-Samuelson has called "the most important philosophical text to be produced in the Ottoman Empire."[20] Also based on Aristotle's *Ethics* was Almosnino's major Spanish work, printed in Salonika in Hebrew characters, *Regimiento de la vida* (1564).[21] This book was printed together with a second work, *Tratado de los sueños*, analyzing the relationship between dream and prophecy. Both texts were republished in Latin characters in eighteenth-century Amsterdam.[22] The language of Almosnino's vernacular works was still very close to Castilian,

[17] A critical edition was published by Zvi Malakhi, *Alilot ha-Avir: Amadís de Gaula* (Tel Aviv, 1981).

[18] Yosef Yahalom, "A Hebrew Renaissance in the Sephardi Diaspora" [Hebrew] *Pe'amim* 26 (1986), 9–28; Joseph Hacker, "The Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987), 95–135.

[19] Meir Zvi Bnaya, *Moshe Almosnino, ish Saloniki* (Tel Aviv, 1996); Olga Borovaya, *The Beginnings of Ladino Literature: Moses Almosnino and His Readers* (Bloomington, 2017); Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "The Ultimate End of Human Life in Postexpulsion Philosophic Literature," in Benjamin Gampel, ed., *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391–1648* (New York, 1997), 223–52, 351–80 (notes); Tirosh-Samuelson, "Jewish Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity," in Daniel Frank and Oliver Leaman, eds., *History of Jewish Philosophy* (London, 1997), 499–573.

[20] Tirosh-Samuelson, "Jewish Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity," 536.

[21] Moše ben Baruk Almosnino, *Regimiento de la vida, Tratado de los suenyos*, ed. John Zemke (Tempe, 2004). For an extensive discussion of *Regimiento de la vida* and Almosnino's moral philosophy, see Bnaya, *Almosnino*, 135–49, and Zemke's introduction to his edition of *Regimiento de la vida*.

[22] *Regimiento de la vida* in Amsterdam in 1729; *Transformaciones de Morpheo, ó Tractado de los sueños* in Amsterdam in 1734.

though written in Hebrew letters, and it is telling that they were republished in western Europe, in Latin characters.[23]

Almosnino's vernacular works were clearly written for a highly literate audience of former *conversos* who were steeped in Renaissance culture and who had to be re-integrated into the universe of rabbinic tradition, and thus his writings were quite different from the Judeo-Spanish vernacular literature that emerged in later centuries. Echoing a broader transition in Jewish thought at the time, Almosnino's work shows what Tirosh-Samuelson has described as a "shift from intellectualism to voluntarism," a "softening of Maimonidean intellectualism by agreeing with [the medieval Spanish Jewish philosopher] Crescas that God is the supreme Will . . . and that the ultimate end of human life is a combination of both the knowledge and the love of God." The path toward perfection and love of God is defined by the performance of the divine commandments (*mitzvot*), "not because they are instrumental to the theoretical knowledge of God but because they have an intrinsic value as the expression of God's Will."[24] Almosnino thus provided a defense of rabbinic tradition and law against the skepticism prevalent among many former *conversos* in the philosophical idiom familiar to his intended audience.

In 1566, Almosnino left Salonika as part of a delegation that was dispatched to Constantinople in order to negotiate with the imperial authorities about lifting newly imposed levies and restoring the previous privileges of the community, which had been paying its poll tax by supplying the uniforms to the Ottoman Janissary corps since 1537. Almosnino remained in Constantinople for a year and a half, and during his lengthy sojourn in the imperial capital he wrote four Ladino texts that Pilar Romeu has published in a modern edition under the title *Crónica de los reyes otomanos.*[25] The first part is an account of the death of Sultan Süleyman I in 1566 and the ascension of Sultan Selim II, during Almosnino's own visit to Constantinople. The second part deals with the reign of Sultan Süleyman. The third text consists of a description of the city of Constantinople, dealing with aspects as varied as the climate, food, hygiene, economic life, and, of course, the Jewish community in the

[23] Romero, therefore, doesn't consider his writings as part of Ladino literature, but calls Almosnino's language a form of *pre-judeoespañol*. See Elena Romero, *La creación literaria en lengua sefardí* (Madrid, 1992), 18. Olga Borovaya challenges this notion in "Moses Almosnino's Epistles: A Sixteenth-century Genre of Sephardic Vernacular Literature," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 6, 2 (2014), 251–69.

[24] Tirosh-Samuelson, "The Ultimate End of Human Life," 247, 251.

[25] Moisés Almosnino, *Crónica de los reyes otomanos*, ed. Pilar Romeu Ferré (Barcelona, 1998); see also Bnaya, *Almosnino*, 58–82 (on Almosnino's mission to Constantinople), 150–68 (on his chronicle of the Ottoman sultans).

imperial capital. This is followed by Almosnino's own account of the Salonikan mission to Constantinople, which ended successfully only after a long series of setbacks and disappointments. Only one manuscript of the text, in Spanish written in Hebrew letters, has come down to us, though an abbreviated and somewhat modified version appeared in print, in Latin characters, as *Extremos y grandezas de Constantinopla* in Madrid in 1638, edited by Iacob Cansino, the Jewish royal interpreter at Oran, a Spanish outpost on the coast of Algeria.[26]

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: THE "SILENT CENTURY" OF LADINO LETTERS

By the seventeenth century, a Judeo-Spanish *koiné* had developed that linked Jewish communities throughout the Ottoman provinces on the Balkans and in Asia Minor, as well as Judeo-Spanish communities in the Ottoman Levant. Yaron Ben-Naeh has recently described the seventeenth century as the "formative period" of Ottoman Jewry – a period during which Ottoman Jewish culture came into its own through its "deep interaction with Ottoman urban life." What is more, by the seventeenth century, "an 'invented' Sephardic group identity overshadowed specific ethnic-communal identities" that had persisted well into the sixteenth century.[27] The rise of a shared vernacular, and the normative character of the legal writings of the sixteenth-century Ottoman Sephardic rabbi Joseph Karo (namely, the *Shulḥan Arukh*), conspired with the impact of the Ottoman imperial context in forging something of a common Ottoman Sephardic culture that was more than the sum of its various transplanted Hispano-Jewish parts. Nonetheless, few books were published in Ladino in a 150-year period extending from 1580 to 1730; among the few exceptions is a Ladino glossary on the biblical text, *Heshek Shlomo*, printed in Venice in 1588 and 1617. The seventeenth century is generally considered to be the "silent" century of Ladino letters and the language of choice for the Jewish literary elites in the Ottoman Empire at the time was Hebrew. The main reason, arguably, was the declining number of *converso* immigrants, who had been the main audience for the Ladino works printed in the previous century and most of whom were

[26] See Jonathan Israel, "The Jews of Spanish North Africa (1580–1669)," in Israel, *Diasporas Within a Diaspora* (Leiden, 2002), 151–84, esp. 164–5.

[27] Yaron Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans* (Tübingen, 2008), 18, 419. See also Minna Rozen, "Individual and Community in the Jewish Society of the Ottoman Empire: Salonica in the Sixteenth Century," in Avigdor Levy, ed., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, 1994), 215–73; Jonathan Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry* (New York, 2013).

now establishing themselves in Amsterdam, where Spanish and Portuguese printing thrived throughout the seventeenth century,[28] as well as in other places in western Europe.

Still, in his study of Abraham Toledo's 2,500-line Ladino poem, or *copla*, retelling the biblical story of Joseph, Avner Peretz has shown recently that the image of the "silent century" is misleading as the absence of Ladino literature *in print* does not mean that Ladino creativity ceased altogether in the seventeenth century. Thus, whereas the text of Toledo's *Coplas de Yosef ha-Tsadik* was first printed in Constantinople in 1732 (and four more times until 1870), it appears that it was written as early as the first half of the seventeenth century. A great portion of the *copla* consists of dramatic scenes with direct speech and dialogs, and extensive parts are lyrical poems that were intended for musical performance, instructions for which are included in the text and refer to traditional Ottoman musical forms such as *makam* and *usul*.[29] Peretz suggests that Toledo's *copla* had lived on through dramatic performance and represents a public and living Judeo-Spanish literary tradition in the seventeenth century before it was transformed into a printed text in the eighteenth century. Similarly, rabbinic scholars would have delivered their sermons orally in the Ladino vernacular of the Ottoman Sephardic Jews, yet when it came to publishing printed versions of these sermons they would invariably do so in Hebrew.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: RISE OF LADINO PRINT CULTURE

Beginning in the eighteenth century, a new Ladino print culture developed on an unprecedented scale in the cities of the Ottoman Empire and prepared the ground for a thriving Judeo-Spanish literary public sphere in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What generated this surge in Ladino print culture – at first, much of it popularized rabbinic literature – in the first half of the eighteenth century? While several scholars have suggested that the rise of vernacular rabbinic writings came as a response to a decline in traditional learning and a crisis of rabbinic authority in the wake of the abortive messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi in the late seventeenth century, there is little if any direct evidence in Ladino literature that the authors were responding to Sabbateanism (and, in fact, some harbored neo-Sabbatean sympathies

[28] Harm den Boer, *La literatura sefardí de Amsterdam* (Alcalá de Henares, 1995).

[29] Avner Perez, ed., *Abraham Toledo, "Las Coplas de Yosef Ha-Tsadik"* [Hebrew and Ladino] (Jerusalem, 2005).

themselves).[30] The frequent lamentation of a decline in learning, moreover, was a common topos in rabbinic educational literature of many different periods and should not be taken at face value. Instead, the creation of a vast new library of Ladino writing in the eighteenth century was a collective effort to preserve and to transmit knowledge that responded not to a decline of knowledge but to a new educational ideal. As I have suggested elsewhere, this new educational ideal may well be traced to the rise of Lurianic Kabbalah (popularized in the wake of the Sabbatean movement), which emphasized the responsibility of every single Jew in the process of redemption through the meticulous performance of the divine commandments and prescribed prayers – and which therefore depended on a broad expansion of knowledge beyond the traditional learned elites.[31] Thus, while the earlier Ladino literature of the sixteenth century had been intended for a readership composed of former *conversos*, often well versed in western European culture, the new Ladino print culture of the eighteenth century was designed to reach a broad public of Judeo-Spanish-speaking Jews, deeply integrated into Ottoman urban society, in order to educate them in the fundamentals of rabbinic tradition.

One of the authors instrumental in bringing about the unprecedented expansion of Ladino literature was Abraham Asa (Constantinople, *c.* 1710 – *c.* 1780),[32] whose fame rests in particular on his numerous translations of Hebrew works into the Ladino vernacular of the Ottoman Jews. Asa was also the author of an extensive book of *coplas, Sefer Tsorkhei Tsibur* (1733), which presented the precepts of Judaism in rhymed verse. Among Asa's most important works was his translation of the Pentateuch (1739).[33] He translated numerous other texts and created a veritable library of traditional knowledge in the vernacular, from a Judeo-Spanish version of the mystical *Otiyot de-Rabi Aqiba* (*Letras de Rabi Aqiba*, 1729) to translations of the prayer book (*Bet Tefilah*, 1739), ethical literature (Elijah ha-Cohen's

[30] See Luis Landau, "R. Jacob Khuli's Attitude Towards Shabbateanism" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 15 (1983), 58–66; Gershom Scholem, "Elijah ha-Kohen ha-Itamari and Sabbateanism," in *Mehqarei Shabta'ut* (Tel Aviv, 1991), [Hebrew], 453–77, on the author of one of the most popular books of rabbinic ethics in the eighteenth century, which was translated into Ladino by Abraham Asa and re-edited numerous times.

[31] Matthias B. Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Ottoman Sephardic Culture* (Bloomington, 2005), 35–41.

[32] *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. J. Katzkin and I. Elbogen (Berlin, 1929), *s.v.* "Assa, Abraham ben Isaak." See also Romero, *Creación*.

[33] Asa's translation of the Prophets appeared in 1743, the "five scrolls" (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther) in 1744, and the remaining part of *Ketuvim* (or "writings") in 1745.

eighteenth-century *Shevet Musar*, 1742, and Isaac Aboab's fourteenth-century *Menorat ha-Ma'or*, 1762), history (*Sefer bin Gorion y resto de historias verdaderas*, 1743), and Jewish law (*Shulḥan ha-Melekh*, a translation of sections from Joseph Karo's *Shulḥan Arukh*, 1749).

The *magnum opus* of this new Ladino print culture was the multi-volume, encyclopedic commentary on the Bible, the *Me'am Lo'ez*, begun by Asa's contemporary Jacob Huli (Ottoman Palestine, *c.* 1689 – Constantinople 1732).[34] Huli's pioneering volume on Genesis appeared in Constantinople in 1730. After Huli died in 1732, before he could complete his work on the second volume of the *Me'am Lo'ez*, Isaac Magriso continued the unfinished commentary on Exodus (Constantinople, 1746), and published the volumes on Leviticus (1753) and Numbers (1764). The *Me'am Lo'ez* is a vast anthology of traditional Jewish knowledge presented as a commentary on the text of the Bible and composed in the Judeo-Spanish vernacular of the Ottoman Jews. Huli used over 200 different sources for his massive anthology, indicating his references on the margins of the text and claiming that there was no innovation involved in his work and that he faithfully translated his sources into the vernacular. In reality, however, as Luis Landau and Tamar Alexander have argued, Huli transformed his sources and refashioned them for the benefit of his intended audience, the average Ottoman Jew who did not understand Hebrew and whom he wanted to educate in rabbinic tradition. In this process of rewriting, Huli interpreted his sources, shortened, amended, or amplified them, and served as an intermediary between Jewish tradition and his intended popular audience.[35]

Huli's *Me'am Lo'ez* proved to be very successful, in particular the volumes on Genesis (nine editions between 1730 and 1897) and on Exodus (seven editions of Huli's first part between 1733 and 1868, and four editions of Magriso's second part between 1746 and 1866), published in Constantinople, Salonika, and Izmir, as well as, in the nineteenth century, in Livorno (from where the tomes reached readers in North

[34] Isaac Molho, "Ish ha-Ashkolot R. Ya'aqov Culi Gedol ha-Sofrim bi-Yehudit-Sefaradit ba'al Antologyah Me'am Lo'ez, Mishpahto, Hayav u-Tequfato," *Otsar Yehudei Sfarad* 5 (1962), 80–94; Moshe David Gaon, *Maskiyot Levav al Me'am Lo'ez* (Jerusalem, 1933); Michael Molho, *Le Meam-Loez: Encyclopédie populaire du séphardisme levantin* (Salonika, 1945); David Gonzalo Maeso and Pascual Pascual Recuero, eds., *Me'am lo'ez: el gran comentario bíblico sefardí* (Madrid, 1964).

[35] Luis Landau, "The Transformation of the Talmudic Story in the 'Me'am Lo'ez'" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 7 (1981), 35–49; Landau, "*Me'am Lo'ez* – Tradition and its Renewal in Judeo-Spanish Literature" [Hebrew], *Shevet va-'am* 2nd series, 5 (1984), 307–21; Tamar Alexander, "The Character of R. Isaac Luria in the Judeo-Spanish Story – The Story of 'The Converso and the Shewbread' in Me'am Lo'ez" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 26 (1986), 87–107.

Africa as well). In the nineteenth century, a number of authors adapted Huli's model and published several volumes of the *Me'am Lo'ez* on other biblical books, for example on Esther (1864) and on the Song of Songs (1899).

The overall structure of the *Me'am Lo'ez* is provided by the framework of the biblical text. Arnold Goldberg, in an analysis of a chapter from the *Me'am Lo'ez* on Genesis, distinguishes two different textual elements within Huli's literary composition: those that actually refer directly to the biblical text (he calls them "lemmatic" texts), and extensive excursive units that use the scriptural passage as a point of departure without commenting on the biblical text itself. The macro-structure of the chapter is provided by the interplay of the "lemmatic" texts, which explain and expand on the biblical text, and the excursive units, which address a wide array of topics, from the precepts of Jewish law to ethical advice to explanations of astronomy or matters of hygiene. A special place is occupied by the stories, or *ma'asim*, which are sometimes adapted from rabbinic literature and sometimes from Sephardic folklore, and which are included both to teach and to entertain.[36] The "lemmatic" texts add up to a narrative whole, as they are tied to the progression of the biblical text itself. According to Goldberg, the excursive texts do not necessarily follow a coherent pattern, though it seems that the matter still warrants further attention.[37] A close reading of the story of Joseph in Potiphar's house, for example, shows that the various excursive passages – on the dangers of spilling one's semen in vain, or the story of the ten rabbinic martyrs of the Roman period – are linked to the narrative section of the text itself (the midrashic tradition that Joseph actually spilled ten drops of semen when tempted by Potiphar's wife) and address a recurring theme, reward and punishment.[38] Especially in the commentary on the non-narrative parts of the biblical text, the *Me'am Lo'ez* also serves as a compendium of Jewish law. For example, roughly one-third of the *Me'am Lo'ez* on Exodus, a commentary on the portion "Mishpatim," is a digest of various matters of Halakhah, putting fairly complex legal issues at the fingertips of the vernacular reader.

Besides rabbinic literature, many *coplas* that had been transmitted orally or were performed publicly, like those of Abraham Toledo, now appeared in print and many more were written in the eighteenth century. Elena

[36] See Aitor García Moreno, *Relatos del pueblo ladinán (Me'am Lo'ez de Éxodo)* (Madrid, 2004).

[37] Arnold Goldberg, *Me'am Lo'ez: Diskurs und Erzählung in der Komposition. Hayye Sara, Kapitel 1* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984).

[38] Jacob Huli, *Me'am Lo'ez Bereshit* (Constantinople, 1730), ch. 4, "Va-yeshev," 233bff.

Romero has suggested that there was an uninterrupted *copla* tradition from the time of the Spanish expulsion in the late fifteenth century down to the *coplas* that appeared in print in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although there are no written records of *coplas* predating the early 1700s.[39]

Coplas are poems that can have anywhere between just a few and several hundred stanzas, though they most commonly have somewhere between 10 and 30, with each stanza having from three verses in some cases to up to nine in more complex structures. The rhyme patterns vary, from monorhyme in stanzas of three verses and quatrains with a rhyme of *abab*, to the more complex structure of nine verses with a rhyme *ababbccdd* that is common in the Purim *coplas* and which was later employed for other *coplas* as well. Another common form is the *zéjel* with a recurring one or two-verse refrain and stanzas of three to five monorhyme verses, with the last verse returning to the rhyme of the refrain. Acrostics are very common, for instance beginning each stanza with a different (Hebrew) letter in alphabetical or reverse alphabetical order, or spelling out the name of the author. *Coplas*, though performed orally, were (at least from the beginning of the eighteenth century) transmitted mainly in writing and were part of written, learned Judeo-Spanish culture and, thus, in the gendered field of traditional Ladino literature, the work of male authors (though intended for male and female readers alike); some of the most prominent authors of eighteenth-century Ladino *coplas* include Haim Yom-Tov Magula, Jacob Uziel, and Judah bar Leon Cal'i.[40] To date, around 500 different *coplas* (and a total of 1500 different versions) have been identified.[41]

The content of the *coplas* is often narrative, presenting stories about biblical heroes, for example, inspired by the traditions of rabbinic interpretation, or describing historical events, as in the case of local Purim celebrations, which commemorated the deliverance of a community from danger. They are also often didactic and prescriptive, designed to convey the teachings of rabbinic ethics (*musar*) or Jewish law (Halakhah). Haim Yom-Tov Magula, whose *coplas* are a case in point, declares in his "Visiones divinas" (*c.* 1745):

[39] Romero, *Creación*, 146–7.

[40] A comprehensive definition of the different varieties of *coplas* is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a more extensive analysis of the genre, see Iacob M. Hassán, "Un género castizo sefardí: las coplas," in Paloma Díaz-Mas, ed., *Los sefardíes: cultura y literatura* (San Sebastian, 1988), 103–23; Elena Romero, *Creación*, 141–76; Romero, *Primera selección de coplas sefardíes* (Córdoba, 1991); Paloma Díaz-Mas, *Los sefardíes: historia, lengua y cultura* (Barcelona, 1997), 137–44.

[41] Ángel Berenguer Amador, "El género literario de las coplas," in Elena Romero, ed., *Sefardíes: literatura y lengua de una nación dispersa* (Cuenca, 2008), 327.

Yo hago cantigas
que los hombres canten,
vean mis palabras
y que se quebranten;
no hago cantigas
que bailen y salten,
que en nada de esto
no envelunta el Dio.[42]

Other *coplas* were written in praise of the Land of Israel, for example Jacob Berab's *coplas* in his book *Zimrat ha-Arets* on the rebuilding of a Jewish community in eighteenth-century Tiberias (Mantua, 1744).

INTO THE MODERN AGE

Ladino literature in the eighteenth century was clearly a conservative enterprise, and it remained for the most part the province of rabbinic writers. It was meant to preserve and reinforce rabbinic tradition, and authors like Yom-Tov Magula or Jacob Huli explicitly presented their writings as alternatives to more secular pastimes. In the course of the century, the only explicitly secular work in Ladino, presenting an open challenge to the primacy of rabbinic scholarship by advocating the study of secular knowledge and foreign languages, was written outside the Ottoman Empire, though by an Ottoman Jew and ostensibly for an Ottoman Jewish audience: David Attias published his book, *La Güerta de Oro*, in the Italian port city of Livorno in 1778, anticipating some of the challenges to rabbinic tradition that became common in Ladino writing after the mid nineteenth century.[43]

Inadvertently, however, the rise of Ottoman Ladino literature in print prepared the ground for some of the broad changes that the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire would undergo in the nineteenth century. Huli's *Me'am Lo'ez* and other works like it opened rabbinic tradition to a broad new audience, including women and others who had hitherto been all but excluded from rabbinic learning, and thus contributed to the emergence of a new Ladino reading public. The use of an easily accessible language, as well as the elaborate index which Huli appended to

[42] "I create songs / that the people should sing, / let them see my words / and may they be chastised; / I do not create songs / so that they may dance and jump, / for nothing of that kind / is desired by God." Quoted in Romero, *Creación*, 147. On Magula's *coplas*, see Elena Romero, *Seis coplas sefardíes de "castiguerio" de Hayim Yom-Tob Magula* (Madrid, 2003).

[43] Matthias B. Lehmann, "A Livornese 'Port Jew' and the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, 2 (2005), 51–76.

the *Me'am Lo'ez* to make his vast encyclopedia more navigable,[44] facilitated reading practices without the mediating control of a rabbinic scholar: the *Me'am Lo'ez* and other such vernacular books could be read aloud in study groups, thus sanctioning sociability outside the confines of the community institutions, and enabled silent, individual study and reading as well.[45]

The authors of Ladino literature certainly understood the potential challenge that these new reading practices posed to rabbinic authority: in the introduction to his two-volume *Meshivat Nefesh* (Constantinople, 1743–4), in which he explained the 613 commandments of Jewish tradition in a commentary on Salomon ibn Gabirol's *Azharot* "made in the mold of the *Me'am Lo'ez*," Sabbatai Vitas expressed the hope that his exposition of the commandments would increase popular knowledge of halakhic matters and make people more conscientious about their religious observance. But he also warned that, given the complexity of religious law, the reader should not make the mistake of relying exclusively on this written compendium and should still seek the direct advice of a rabbinic scholar, who remained the ultimate arbiter of Jewish legal doctrine and practice.[46] In the end, the Ladino authors and translators of the eighteenth century unwittingly prepared the ground for the rise of a vernacular Ladino public sphere in the nineteenth century that was subsequently transformed and secularized by Westernizing intellectuals who, like their eighteenth-century predecessors, sought to educate and entertain a broad reading public by creating translated and original works in the vernacular language of the Ottoman Sephardim.

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[44] Pilar Romeu Ferré, *Las llaves del Meam Loez* (Barcelona, 2000).
[45] Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Ottoman Sephardic Culture*, 61–75.
[46] Sabbatai Vitas, *Meshivat Nefesh*, vol. 1 (Constantinople, 1743), Introduction.

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CHAPTER 10

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN EARLY MODERN YIDDISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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Since its birth in the Middle Ages, the vernacular language gradually emerged as one of the major components of the multilingual Ashkenazic society.[1] Reserved at first to the oral register, Yiddish was increasingly used as a language of culture and learning, with a body of texts both religious and secular. The first written trace of Yiddish in the *Maḥzor* of Worms (1272) clearly shows the areas of creation and the social uses suited to the various languages used by Ashkenazic Jews.[2] Within the blank space in the first two letters of a Hebrew prayer we find a short blessing in Yiddish dedicated to the porter who carries the *Maḥzor* from its owner's home to the synagogue. The separation between the holy tongue, used for the most part in the liturgy and commentaries, and the vernacular, employed for the additional blessing addressed to an ordinary Jew, constitutes one of the basic tenets of the diglossia and language practices within Ashkenazic society.[3]

During the pre-modern era, the codified division between the two languages continued, in both the oral and written registers. A dynamic complementarity and in some cases a real separation between Hebrew and

[1] Various conceptions exist concerning the birth of Yiddish. Max Weinreich situates its origin in the eleventh century in the Jewish communities of the Rhineland. This thesis has been contested by linguists such as Robert King, who place its origin in the communities of Southern Germany, more specifically in Bavaria. Some historians, like Nathan Susskind, believe that Yiddish as a specific linguistic system was crystallized much later, around the fifteenth or sixteenth century. See Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, 2 vols. (New York, 2008); Robert King, "Proto Yiddish Morphology," in Dovid Katz, ed., *Origins of the Yiddish Language* (Oxford, 1987), 73–81; Nathan Susskind, "Batrakhtungen vegn der geshikhte fun yidish," *Yidishe shprakh* 13 (1953) 97–108.

[2] Chone Shmeruk, "The Versified Old Yiddish Blessing in the Worms Mahzor," in Malachi Beit-Arié, ed., *The Worms Mahzor, the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, Ms. Heb. 4° 781, Introductory Volume* (Jerusalem, 1985), 100–3. The prayer, *beda'ato*, is on fol. 92a.

[3] Chone Shmeruk, *Sifrut Yidish, Perakim le-Toldoteha* (Tel Aviv, 1978), 9–39.

Yiddish were permanent features of the linguistic system specific to Ashkenazic culture. The time between *mitl-yidish* (1500–1700) and the beginning of modern Yiddish (starting from 1700) is a remarkable laboratory in which to observe the continuity of the vernacular language.[4] It is also a period during which Yiddish underwent major evolutions that reflected the mutations of Jewish society.

One of the outstanding traits of this period is the difference that exists between the languages used in printed production and the multiplicity of dialects, and the interferences that can exist between the two registers. The difficulty of determining the structural traits of middle Yiddish lies in the fact that the printed texts are rooted in older linguistic traditions, such as Bible translations, while they depend at the same time on contingent factors, such as the place of origin of the authors and correctors and the location of the printing shops. This heterogeneity underscores the flexibility of Yiddish, which can have many configurations, depending on geographical context, social usages, and porosity with the majority cultures. The hiatus that exists between the literary, supra-dialectal language, which tends to be reproduced from one edition to another, and the spoken language, which changes and evolves, explains why the printers made linguistic adjustments, constantly re-writing the "classic" texts of old Yiddish literature.[5]

During the transition period between old Yiddish (*alt-yidish*) and modern Yiddish (*nay-yidish*), the language experienced, in the oral register, an evolution in phonology, morphology and syntax, as well as a crystallization of new forms.[6] We note a fragmentation of dialectal areas and language practices as well as interferences with the surrounding cultures and ways of speaking. From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we observe a growing linguistic consciousness about the existence of a vernacular Jewish language with specific traits.[7] The Yiddish language is clearly differentiated in a number of texts. Thus, in a version of *Ditraykh* (*Sigenot*) (Krakow, 1597), the title page indicates that the work "was inspired by a

[4] For *mitl-yidish*, see Max Weinreich, "Yiddish," in *Algemeyne entsiklopedye* (Paris, 1940), 53–60.

[5] Dov-Ber Kerler, *The Origins of Modern Literary Yiddish* (Oxford, 1999). See particularly the linguistic differences in the editions, printed from the seventeenth to late eighteenth centuries, of ten texts from Old Yiddish literature: 263–319.

[6] On this aspect, see Max Weinreich, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh* (New York, 1973), II, 388–91.

[7] In a work by Yosef Maarssen, *Sheyne artlekhe geshikhte* (Amsterdam, 1710), we read that this is translated "oys dos galkhes rekht in unzr shprakh" ("from a non-Jewish language in Latin characters [Dutch] into our language"). In the translation of *Sefer mikvey isroel* (1691), the translator explains that he transposed the language of "non-Jewish Germans" (*Goyim ashkenazim*) into the "language of German Jews" (*Yehudim ashkenazim*). See Max Weinreich, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh*, II, 323.

[book] in Latin characters and translated into Yiddish" ("Oys genumen fun galkhes un oyf yudish far taytsht").[8] In the *Gzeyre lid al gzeyres hakehiles d-medines ukrayne* (Amsterdam, *c.* 1649) we read, for example, that during the pogroms in Ukraine, the assailants, to ridicule the Jews, spoke in Yiddish ("oyf yidish geret").[9] Within the Christian world, the various appellations used show the difficulty of grasping a language whose structure is close to that of the German dialects but which also possesses a Hebrew–Aramaic component. We find the word "yidish" in a Christian source from 1478, which mentions a monk who "spoke Hebrew and Yiddish well" ("gut hebreish yidish gereyt").[10] We may also note, principally in Latin texts, many compound terms intending to show the corrupt and hybrid character of Yiddish.[11]

The pre-modern era, starting in the mid sixteenth century, saw an increasingly clear differentiation of the Yiddish dialects, particularly the distinction between western and eastern Yiddish (*mayrev-yidish* and *mizrekh-yidish*). The vernacular was spoken in Germany, but also in Alsace and Switzerland. It spread into Holland and the communities of northern Germany. The center of gravity of the Yiddish world gradually moved eastward, to what was becoming the central space of Ashkenazic Judaism. Yiddish was used in Bohemia and Moravia; it spread to Courland, Mazovia, Bielorussia, Ukraine, and also to Palestine where it was spoken in the Ashkenazic community of Jerusalem. Moreover, we see the formation of

[8] Nokhem Shtif, "Loshn ashkenaz, taytsch, leshonenu, yidish, unzer shprakh," *Yidishe filologye* 1 (1924), 386–8. Also used in the texts are the terms *leshonenu, ivri-taytsh*, and *yidish-taytsh*. See Weinreich, "Yiddish," 26–29, and *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh*, I, 321–4; Chone Shmeruk, *Sifrut Yidish be-Polin* (Jerusalem, 1981) no. 36, 96–7.

[9] Max Weinreich, *Bilder fun der yidisher literaturgeshikhte* (Vilna, 1928), 192–218.

[10] The text reads "desselben jars da kom ein predigermunch (Petrus Negri) her gen Nurnberg der kund gut ebereisch, judisch, reden un der juden puecher lessen" ("the same year came to Nurnberg a monk, who spoke good Hebrew and Yiddish and read the books of the Jews"). Quoted by Solomon A. Birnbaum, *Yiddish, A Survey and a Grammar* (Toronto, 1979), 46. In a text from 1451, we read "en jode geschapen unde spricket ok also" ("He looks like a Jew and also speaks like one"), cited in Gustav Hertel, ed., *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Magdeburg*, vol. II (Halle, 1894), 633, no. 608. See also Yankev Shatsky, "Vegn di nemen far yidish," *Yivo-bleter* 7 (1935), 148–54; I. Rivkind, "Wi alt iz der nomen 'yidish?'" *Tsukunft* (1931), 65; Elye Spivak, "Di gruntnemen fun yidish," *Frage fun der yidisher shprakh* (1938), 71–86; Noah Prylucki, "Nemen fun shprakhn un farben," *Yidish far ale* 1 (1938), 16–19.

[11] Such as *Teutonice et Hebraice* (Boeschenstein, 1514); *Hebraeo-Germanica* (Fagius, 1543; Buxtorf, 1609; Wolf, 1721); *Ebraeo-Germanica* (Pfeiffer, 1680); *Hebraeo-Teutonica* (Möller, 1700); *Judaeo-Germanica* (Wolf, 1723); *Germanica Judaeorum* (Haselbauer, 1743); *Judaeo Teutonica* (Tychsen, 1775). See Jerold Frakes, *The Cultural Study of Yiddish in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2007).

co-dialects within Western and Eastern Yiddish.[12] In his autobiography, Yaakov Emden explains, for example, that the members of the three communities of Hamburg, Altona, and Wandsbeck wanted to hire a rabbi from Lithuania, but had to abandon the idea because they had difficulty understanding what he was saying.[13] In the responsa, the Ashkenazic world is divided into linguistic areas corresponding to specific synagogal customs and ritual practices. The Jews of western Europe were called "sons of the Rhine" or "sons of Lotharingia" (*bney rinus* or *bney loter*); those of central Europe were sons of Bohemia (*bney peheym* or *peym*), of the Danube (*bney donau*), of Austria (*bney estraykh*); and those of eastern Europe, sons of Poland (*bney polin*). The rabbis also distinguish between the Jews of western Europe, the *beney hey*, who pronounced *khes* as a *hey*, and the *bney khes*, those of eastern Europe, who pronounced *khes* as a *khof*.[14]

From the end of the sixteenth century, Christian scholars began making succinct descriptions of Yiddish and its dialects. Some of these, like Johannes Buxtorf, unaware of the existence of regional variants, merely distinguish between the "proper usage" of German Jews and the "corrupt" forms of the Jews of Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland. Others, like Johann Christof Wagenseil, list several dialectal pronunciations, but without any systematic analysis.[15] Carl Wilhelm Friedrich, in *Unterricht in der Judensprache und Schrift* (Penzlau, 1784), was the first to differentiate four dialectal areas of

[12] Taking a phrase like *koyfn fleysh*, in Western Yiddish it is pronounced /kafn flash/ with a long /a/; in Northeastern Yiddish (Bielorussia, Lithuania, Latvia) /keyfn fleysh/; in central Poland and western Galicia /koyfn fleysh/; and in the south (Ukraine, Romania, and eastern Galicia) /koyfn fleysh/. Solomon Birnbaum distinguishes the Northeastern dialect (O-Dialekt) and the Southeastern (U-Dialekt), which is itself divided into two zones /ay/ and /ey/. There is also an intermediate zone (/kayfn flaysh/) that includes a western part (Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, and western Hungary) and an eastern part (Transylvania, the Carpathians, and eastern Hungary). We may also note lexical differences such as, among others, "to pray": *davnen* (Eastern Yiddish) /*oren* (Western Yiddish); "prayer book": *sider* (Eastern Yiddish) /*tefile* (Western Yiddish). See Dovid Katz, "Zur Dialektologie des Jiddischen," in Werner Besch, Ulrich Knoop, Wolfgang Putschke, and Herbert Wiegand, eds., *Dialektologie* (Berlin, 1983), 1018–41.

[13] Yaakov Emden, *Megilat Sefer* (Warsaw, 1896), 127.

[14] Dovid Katz, "East and West, *Khes* and *Shin* and the Origin of Yiddish," in Israel Bartal, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Chava Turniansky, eds., *Studies in Jewish Culture in Honour of Chone Shmeruk* (Jerusalem, 1993), 9–37.

[15] Johannes Buxtorf, in certain cases, no longer refers to differences between German dialects but speaks of internal differences in the Yiddish language, notably when he designates the form *enk* ("you") as characteristic of Polish Yiddish. See Johannes Buxtorf, "Lectionis hebraeo-germanicae usus et exercitatio," *Thesaurus grammaticus linguae sanctae hebraeae* (Basel, 1609), 648–71 (quotation p. 660). J.-C. Wagenseil, *Belehrung der Jüdisch-Teutschen Red- und Schreibart* (Königsberg, 1699).

Yiddish and to begin a phonological description.[16] Although this classification is based on geopolitical designations of his time, it nevertheless distinguishes the main divisions that were used and analyzed by contemporary dialectologists – that is, western, eastern, and central Yiddish. This typology further contains subregional differences that correspond to local cultural traditions and religious practices. The existence of archives, official documents, response, and private correspondence originating from different parts of the Ashkenazic world make it possible to delimit the dialectal zones that were observed from the seventeenth century.[17] But the richest source for linguistic study of the Yiddish language is literary texts. Concerning Eastern Yiddish we should mention the first known work printed in Yiddish, a bilingual Bible concordance, the *Mirkeves ha-mishne* (Krakow, 1534) or the *Sefer ha-maggid* (3 vols., Lublin, 1623–7); for central Yiddish, there are certain works printed in Prague, including the bilingual biblical glossary the *Beer Moshe* by Moshe Saertels (Prague, 1605); and for Western Yiddish, the *Bove-Bukh* of Elijah Bahur Levita (Isny, 1541), the *Sefer Mides* (Isny, 1542), or the *Mayse-Bukh* (Basel, 1602).[18]

The written language attests as well to a slow process of standardization and codification of Yiddish. Even though the texts maintained links with the different dialects,[19] the growth of printing, at a time when Yiddish was

[16] Dovid Katz, "Origins of Yiddish Dialectology," in Kotz, ed., *Dialects of the Yiddish Language* (Oxford, 1988), 39–55.

[17] Concerning western Yiddish, we may consult documents presented in Raphael Straus, *Urkunden und Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Juden in Regensburg* (Munich, 1960). For one example, the public apology delivered by Zimlin of Ulm before a court of justice, see Jacob Weil, *Responsa* (Venice, 1549), no. 149, fol. 60v. The private correspondences of Prague (1619) are examples of central Yiddish. See Alfred Landau and Bernhard Wachstein, *Jüdische Privatbriefe aus dem Jahre 1619* (Vienna, 1911). Concerning eastern Yiddish, we can mention the following: the testimony given during a trial in Kazimierz (1579) – see the *Sheerit Yosef* by Joseph Mordekhay ben Gershon Ha-Cohen (Krakow, 1590), fol. 44v; the Letter from the Officials of the community of Krakow (1588) – see Bernard D. Weinryb, "A pekl briv in yidish," *Historishe shriftn fun yivo* 2 (1937), 66; the court testimony in Florianow (1614) – see Yoel Serkes (Bach) ben Samuel Halevi Jaffe, *Beit Ḥadash* (Frankfurt, 1697), responsum 57, fol. 37r. See Solomon Birnbaum, *Yiddish, a Survey and a Grammar* (Toronto, 1979), 145–89.

[18] For western Yiddish, one may refer to Alfred Landau, "Die Sprache der Memoiren Glückels von Hameln," *Mitteilungen zur Jüdischen Volkskunde* 7 (1901), 20–68; Erika Timm, "Leshonah shel Glikl," in Chava Turniansky, ed., *Glikl zykhroynes 1691–1709* (Jerusalem, 2006), 61–86; Timm, *Graphishe und phonische Struktur des Westjiddischen* (Tübingen, 1987).

[19] Solomon Birnbaum, among others, studied the delabialization of ö, ü, öü > ei, i, e, and the evolution of the vowel u > i. See Solomon Birnbaum, "Di Historye fun di alte U-klangn in yidish," *Yivo-Bleter* 6 (1934), 25–60. For Max Weinreich, until the eighteenth century, the language of printed texts (*Written* or *Literary language A*) was based on the dialects of western Yiddish. From the end of the eighteenth century, the written language (*Written* or *Literary Language B*) was based on the dialects of eastern Yiddish.

being diffused all over Europe, made it necessary to create a literary *koine*, which could be understood by the greatest number of readers. For printers who wanted to sell their production to the vast market of Ashkenazic communities, it was important to fix and consolidate the language, so that vernacular works could be read despite their dialectal cleavages. A written literary language based on the norms of western Yiddish was constituted, which lasted until the eighteenth century. The gap between spoken and literary written language is perceptible in the traditional books of uses and customs (*minhogim seforim*). These works, read in Italy, Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland, were intended to popularize and recapitulate the main religious principles proper to Ashkenazic culture, and were written in a supradialectal language. In the preface to the Bible translation, Yosef Witzenhausen (Amsterdam, 1679) explains, for example, that he hired Shabbetai Bass to eliminate localisms and make the text accessible to a transnational readership. The same consideration is found in the adaptation of the tales of Boccaccio, the *Sheyne artlekhe geshikhtn*, edited by Yosef Maarssen (Amsterdam, 1710) which explains: "It is impossible to make the Yiddish clear enough for everybody, since every country has its own Yiddish . . . So I ask the benevolent reader to excuse me if the language occasionally is not elegant, since I have put it, in as much as I could, in such a way that everybody can understand [it]."[20] The standardization of printed texts led to a recognition of Yiddish as a possible language of learning, study, and literary creation, while at the same time it reinforced the consciousness of Ashkenazic Jews as forming an autonomous socio-religious group. The formation of a common culture favored the existence of family networks – particularly among merchants and shopkeepers – intellectual exchanges, and the circulation of ideas between different poles of the Ashkenazic world.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century, we observe a gradual obsolescence of the Yiddish spoken in the communities of western Europe, notably in Germany, parallel with the shift of Yiddish culture toward a central pole made up of the communities of the east. Linguistic assimilation gradually led many speakers to abandon Yiddish to adopt the majority languages. Yiddish was also increasingly permeated by German, as indicated by the denominations – common from the eighteenth century onwards, "Jüdisch-Deutsch" or "Jüdischdeutsch." The literary language of the printed texts, based on the predominance of western Yiddish, also tended to disappear, while eastern Yiddish imposed itself as the linguistic

[20] Marion Aptroot, "'I Know This Book of Mine Will Cause Offense . . . ': A Yiddish Adaptation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (Amsterdam, 1710)," *Zutot* 3 (2003), 152–9.

norm in both the oral and the written registers.[21] A good example of the easternization and linguistic modernization of old literary language is provided by the editions of the *Tsenerene* (first edition Hanau, 1622). Because of its popularity, the text served as a basis for many adaptations, either maskilic (Vilna, 1842) or Hasidic (Yozefov, 1845) versions.[22]

The mutations of the pre-modern era gave the vernacular language an increased cultural role within the multilingual Ashkenazic society. Yiddish accompanied migratory currents and the extension of Jewish communities across Europe. In contexts of social breakdown, the vernacular provided structure and played a unifying role. Rulers in various lands granted privileges that enabled Jews to settle in the cities where they created lasting community institutions. At the same time, a succession of discriminatory legislations, expulsions, and episodes of social unrest compelled Jews to leave the cities and settle in small towns, where they lived far from the centers of power, learning, and studies. Harsh economic conditions and absence of religious leadership led to ignorance of the holy tongue and canon texts, and to a danger of religious syncretism. A need was felt to moralize conduct, and disseminate practices among simple Jews who, through lack of study, were in danger of losing contact with the basic texts and practices of Jewish tradition.

The rise of printing and the diffusion of popular works helped to give the vernacular language a greater cultural role. Thus, between the early seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries, a growth in the centers of printing in Europe gave Yiddish new possibilities of dissemination. At first, popular editions were published in the urban centers associated with humanism, the Reformation, and the faculties of theology, such as Northern Italy, Basel, Augsburg, Prague, Lublin, and Krakow. The interest shown by humanists and Hebrew-speaking Christians in the canonic texts, works of Jewish philosophy, and grammatical treatises stimulated the publication of works in Hebrew, particularly editions of the Hebrew Bible, postbiblical sources, medieval commentaries, and manuals of the holy language. In addition, the growth of vernacular languages in Europe led to a growing interest in Yiddish.[23] The popular language of the Jews, close to German but written in Hebrew characters and including a rich component of Hebrew–Aramaic origin, could not fail to arouse the

[21] In 1782, in the *Toleranzpatent* of Joseph II, on the prohibition of the use of Hebrew and Yiddish, we read: "weder des Hebräischen noch der Jüdisch-Teutschen Sprache bedienen." See Max Weinreich, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh*, III, 338.

[22] On the Slavization of literary Yiddish starting in the eighteenth century, see Dov-Ber Kerler, *The Origins of Modern Literary Yiddish* (Oxford, 1999), 100–15.

[23] Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2004).

curiosity of Christian scholars and university students. The same is true for literary texts, which appear in the private collections of such learned men and humanists as, for example, Sebastian Münster, Johannes Buxtorf, and Johannes Reuchlin.[24] The printers, well aware of the economic potential of the vernacular book market, increased the diffusion of works in Yiddish for the benefit of the less literate levels of society, in particular women, children, and less-educated men. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the book market grew and the distribution circuits diversified around major poles like Amsterdam and Frankfurt, where the book fair attracted scholars, printers, and artisans from all of Europe. Printing shops became centers of the formation of a vernacular Jewish literature, with both adaptations from Hebrew sources and creation of original texts. Printing shops also became a meeting point for intellectual contacts between Jews and Christians. Many members of the secondary elite, such as rabbinic court judges, teachers, cantors, and preachers, found in these workshops, whether run by Jews or Christians, a source of livelihood and a space for creation where they could put their knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish to the service of diffusing the major texts of Jewish tradition. Translators, adapters, compilers, authors, printers, correctors, and press operators took part in the creation of a repertoire of vernacular texts, which would be reprinted in the major publishing centers of Europe until the end of the eighteenth century. Popular works were disseminated through peddlers and wandering booksellers to the cities and rural zones of the Ashkenazic world, and then were read and commented on within the home or in small study groups.

Jewish literature in the vernacular naturally has much in common with the Hebrew texts, in particular the great number of translations and adaptations of, and commentaries on, canonic texts. However, it does constitute a specific domain, as is clear from the existence of a body of works that meet the cultural demands and religious needs of Jews with a lower level of education. This consists mainly of glossaries, literal translations (*Taytsh-Khumesh*), commentaries on and adaptations of the Bible in verse and in prose, and collections of prayers recited in the synagogue during the principal holidays or for pious reading by individuals, like prayers of supplication (*tkhines*). There are also the morality books (*Muser seforim*) and customs books (*Minhogim*); popularizations of

[24] On the Yiddish library of Johannes Buxtorf and Johannes Reuchlin, see Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies, Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden, 1996); Reimund Leicht and Wolfgang von Abel, eds., *Verzeichnis der Hebraica in der Bibliothek Johannes Reuchlins* (Ostfildern, 2005).

halakhic rules, often concerning the religious duties of the Jewish women, such as *Sefer mitsves ha-noshim*;[25] Purim plays (*Purim-Shpiln*); and anthologies of tales and legends. A limited number of works were continuously reprinted until the end of the eighteenth century in the major printing centers of the Ashkenazic world. Among the most famous are a homiletic commentary, the *Tsenerene* (Hanau, 1622) by Yaakov ben Itshak Ashkenazi of Janow; the morality book *Sefer lev tov* (Prague, 1620) by Itshak Eliakum of Posen; the compendium of customs, the *Minhogim* (Venice, 1593), by Shimon Levi Guenzburg; and the collection of exempla, the *Mayse-Bukh*, edited by Yaakov ben Abraham Polack (Basel, 1602). A quantitative study of vernacular production shows that it is dominated not so much by a diversity of original works as by the constitution of a classic repertoire that would be reprinted for more than two centuries.[26]

Old Yiddish literature played a decisive role in the conservation, consolidation, and transmission of the sources of Jewish tradition, especially for the benefit of Jews dispersed in rural communities. The popular texts also reflect the mutations of Jewish culture in the pre-modern era. Until the end of the Middle Ages, Yiddish was essentially reserved for the oral register. It was still not recognized as a possible language of study or a vector of traditional knowledge and values. Some rabbis were even reluctant to diffuse certain scriptural sources, halakhic treatises, and mystical or philosophic texts in the vernacular language.[27] The spread of such writings among the less-educated Jews was a threat to the mastery of the scholars. There was a risk that simple men or women who read these books would try to take the place of the decision makers, make their own commentaries, and decree the law without possessing sufficient knowledge and without the mediation of a master.

Yet despite the hostility of some rabbis to fixing in writing the learned traditions previously transmitted from master to disciple,[28] the potential offered by printing and the growing demand for books on the part of the middle levels of Jewish society tended to overcome the resistance of the

[25] Krakow, 1535 (*Azhoras noshim*), 1541 (*Seyder noshim*), 1585 (*Seyder mitsves ha-noshim*); Venice, 1552, 1588 (*Mitsves ha-noshim*).

[26] Jean Baumgarten, *Introduction to the Old Yiddish Literature*, ed. and trans. Jerold Frakes (Oxford, 2003).

[27] Simha Assaf, "Zutot: Teshuva Neged Ḥibur Sifrei Dinim be-Yidish," *Kiryat Sefer* 20 (1943), 41–2.

[28] The same concern was sometimes also leveled against the production of halakhic codes, such as the *Shulḥan Arukh*, even if in Hebrew rather than Yiddish. There was a fear that it would replace talmudic study and change the traditional way of oral transmission from a master. On the debates around the codification of the *Shulḥan Arukh*, see Joseph Davis, "The Reception of the *Shulhan Arukh* and the Formation of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity," *AJS Review* 26, 2 (2002), 251–76.

rabbinic elite. We can observe a growing awareness of the educational, cultural, or religious role of the popular language. Naturally, of the canonic sources and the literary works most commonly printed in Hebrew, only a limited percentage would be transposed into Yiddish. The vernacular was still used mainly to compensate for certain deficiencies in the educational system (geared to the educated and elite) and to transmit the elementary foundations of Jewish tradition to the common people. However, we might wish to modify slightly this picture of the assumed boundaries between "learned" and "popular" domains. The interpenetration of these different types of works tended to favor the circulation of knowledge and the "hybridization" of texts. The dissemination of popular works also confirms a basic change in the means of diffusion of religious sources. A growing number of learned men alternated their use of Hebrew and Yiddish, without of course upsetting the cultural hierarchy and social usage of each language or the traditional division between reading reserved for men and for women. A case in point is Binjamin Aharon ben Abraham Slonik, who studied with the greatest masters of his time, such as Shlomo Luria, Moshe Isserles, and Shlomo ben Leibush of Lublin. He published a collection of responsa in Hebrew, the *Mas'at Binyamin* (Krakow, 1633). At the same time, he edited a compendium of laws in Yiddish intended for women readers, the *Seder mitsves ha-noshim* (Krakow, 1577, 1585), which presented the principal duties of pious women, supplemented by ethical advice.[29] The best-known of these scholars is perhaps Yaacov ben Itzhak Ashkenazi of Janow, rabbi, itinerant preacher, and author of the famous homiletic commentary the *Tsenerene* (Hanau, 1622). A great expert in canonic sources in Aramaic and Hebrew, he composed an anthology of commentaries written in a clear and simple language and intended for simple readers of both sexes who had little knowledge of Hebrew. This work, the most famous of old Yiddish literature went through no fewer than 250 editions until the twentieth century.[30] Changing relations between the holy language and the vernacular is also shown by the publication of bilingual works. These consist not only of prayer books or Bible commentaries, such as the *Sefer ha-maggid* (3 volumes, Lublin, 1623–7), but also of morality books like the *Sam khayim* by Avraham Apeteyker (Prague, 1590) and the *Shevet Musar* by Elijah ben Solomon Abraham ha-Kohen of Smyrna, adapted in Yiddish by Eliezer Sussmann ben Isaac Roedelsheim (Amsterdam, 1732).

[29] Agnes Romer Segal, "Yiddish Works on Women's Commandments in the Sixteenth Century," in *Studies in Yiddish Literature and Folklore* (Jerusalem, 1986), 37–59.

[30] Chava Turniansky and Jacob Elbaum, "Tsene-Rene," in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New York, 2008), II, 1912–13.

Thanks to the rise of printing, the so-called secondary intelligentsia took on a new social role. Learned men with a high level of religious culture put themselves in the service of the Jewish masses to educate them and propagate the bases of Judaism. These scholars worked in printing shops as authors, translators, editors, adapters, correctors, and typesetters. They took part in the mutation of Ashkenazic culture by helping to diffuse canonic texts among the people and to mediate between the culture in Hebrew and that in Yiddish. In this category can be mentioned the author, printer, and rabbinic judge Moshe Frankfurter, who printed an edition of *Mikraot Gedolot* (4 vols., Amsterdam, 1724–7) and a Yiddish translation of *Menorat ha-Maor* (Amsterdam, 1722). Menaḥem Mann ben Solomon ha-Levi Amelander published the *Sheyres isroel*, a translation and supplement in Yiddish of *Sefer Yosifon* (Amsterdam, 1743) and an edition of the *Midrash Tanhuma* (Amsterdam, 1733). There was also Yehiel Mikhl Epstein, who put out a shortened Hebrew version of the *Shney Luḥot ha-Brit* (sometimes referred to as the *Kitsur Shelah*), and a transposition of this work into Yiddish, the *Ets khayim* (Frankfurt, 1720).

The increased production of Yiddish works contributed to a broader diffusion of knowledge, which had until then been restricted largely to scholarly circles. Books became familiar objects in Jewish homes, increasingly a part of pious reading by individuals or in collective ceremonies that punctuate the Jewish year. The texts reached a wide readership that included children and less-educated men, but mainly women readers, who took a greater role in cultural and religious life. The title pages, introductions, and prefaces encouraged reading by young girls (*bokhures un pultsels*) and "pious women" (*frume vayber*) who now became an audience of choice for Old Yiddish literature.[31]

In the medieval period, reading and writing were largely the privilege of scholars, who determined the choice, as well as the time, place, and mode of learning, of the texts. The readers were dependent on habits dictated by the scholars who controlled the circulation and interpretation of scriptural sources. Books and manuscripts intended for private use were commissioned largely by the wealthier classes. For ordinary Jews, transmission remained largely oral, in the form of scriptural study led by rabbis and other scholars.[32] The diffusion of works in Yiddish slowly transformed reading practices

[31] Chava Turniansky, "Meydlekh in der altyidisher literatur," in Walter Röll and Simon Neuberg, eds., *Jiddische Philologie, Festschrift für Erika Timm* (Tübingen, 1999), 7–20; Turniansky, *Glikl zykhroynes 1691–1709*.

[32] On the private nature of copying and reading manuscripts in scholarly circles in the Middle Ages, see Malachi Beit-Arié, *Unveiled Faces of Medieval Hebrew Books* (Jerusalem, 2003), 15, 60–6.

inherited from the Middle Ages by enabling a wider and more direct access to a great many sources, either in the original or adapted from the Hebrew. This mutation coincided with the development of the private sphere, with privatized or individualized reading, which implied a greater personal investment in study and interpretation. More traditional texts became accessible in the vernacular, with no need for commentary by a master or tutor. In addition to reading aloud, other methods such as commenting on texts in small study circles and independent study became more important from the seventeenth century on. In the preface to a biblical commentary, the *Sefer ha-maggid* (Amsterdam, 1676), the editor explains:

> Someone who has spent several days without studying (*ler teg*) can study this book without any need to look for a *magid* who can explain the 24 books of the bible . . . [H]e can study by himself in his home at night or at any time he wishes, whenever he has time. He can read a passage two or three times to be sure he has understood it correctly. [33]

The growth of individual reading in the private space lessened the shame of ignorance or fear of reprimand from the master if one should stray from the accepted interpretation; it made it possible to read and reread a text at one's own pace, as many times as necessary to be sure to grasp its full meaning. The progress of silent reading transformed the relation between the individual and cultural mediators. Unlike guided study between a master and a man or woman reading or studying with him, individual reading lessened the distance between reader and text. It implied a greater freedom to circulate among the works, according to the understanding and cultural level of each, to interpret with no imposition by the learned men or rabbinic masters.

Old Yiddish literature reflects the many evolutions of Ashkenazic culture, including, first and foremost, the popularization of mysticism and the penetration of Kabbalah into religious life. There was a growing conviction that mysticism provided privileged access to the secrets of the Torah and a path toward individual redemption. Kabbalistic ritual was believed to have a theurgic power both to achieve personal unification with God and to further the redemption of the Jewish people. Of course, only a tiny part of the mystical corpus was translated into the vernacular, mainly the ethical components and narratives, not the philosophical or speculative traditions dealing with the *sefirot*, for example the description of the higher worlds or the process of the creation of the world.[34] Collections of prayers of supplication

[33] The *magid* is not, in this case, an itinerant preacher, but a master, a learned man, rabbi, or tutor who reads, studies, and explains to one person or a group the meaning and interpretations of the Bible, in a private or public lesson.

[34] Jean Baumgarten, "Des traductions de textes kabbalistiques dans la littérature yiddish ancienne," *Kabbalah* 27 (2012), 107–48; Baumgarten, "Yiddish Ethical Texts and the

(*tkhines*) abound in references to the Kabbalah, as do the bilingual prayers of Yehiel Mikhl Epstein, the *Seder Tefilah Derekh Yesharah* (Frankfurt am Main, 1697), which describes the mystical repercussions of prayer.[35] Ethical works also contain mystical references, such as the *Ets khayim*, also known as *Kitser SheLaH* (Frankfurt am Main, 1720), an abridged version of the above-mentioned classic work *Shnei Luḥot ha-Brit* by Isaiah ben Abraham ha-Levi Horowitz. A number of opuscules and anthologies include narrative segments from mystical literature – for example, the *Mayse ha-Shem* (Frankfurt am Main, 1691) in which we find legends about Isaac Luria taken from the *Shivḥei ha-Ari*. The most famous works in an ethical and mystical vein are the *Nakhles tsvi* or *Taytsh-Zoyer* (Frankfurt am Main, 1711), an abridged adaptation of ethical parts of the Zohar by Tsvi Hirsh ben Yerahmiel Chotsch, and the *Kav ha-yosher* by Tsvi Hirsh Koidanover (Frankfurt, 1705–6), which includes many references, adapted from the Zohar, to the duality between good and evil. From the end of the seventeenth century, a number of texts attest to the penetration of Sabbatean ideas into popular literature. These works teach us a great deal about the agents of diffusion and the channels of propagation of true facts, rumors, and legendary beliefs that accompanied the revelation of Sabbatai Zevi. The sources show the messianic enthusiasm and mystical fervor that took hold of people at the news of the imminence of redemption.[36] There is a series of letters written around the year 1665 in Hamburg, which describes the fervor of the masses,[37] and the preface to the Yiddish adaptation of the *Sefer ha-Yashar*, entitled *Tsemakh David* (1669), by Abraham ben Moshe Kaf-Serles of Pinczow, which evokes the vast wave of hope raised by the perspective of

Diffusion of the Kabbalah in the 17th and 18th Centuries," *Bulletin du Centre de Recherche Français de Jérusalem* 18 (2007), 73–91; Morris M. Faierstein, *From Safed to Kotsk: Studies in Kabbalah and Hasidism* (Los Angeles, 2013), 103–35.

[35] See Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs* (Boston, 1998).

[36] The *Bashraybung fun shapse-tsevi* [Chronicle of Shabbetai Tsevi], written between 1717 and 1718 by Yehuda Leyb ben Ozer, *shames* of the Ashkenazi community of Amsterdam. Some excerpts are found in the adaptation of the *Yossipon* by Yosef ben Gorion in *Sefer sheyres isroel* (Amsterdam, 1743), translated into Yiddish by Menaḥem Mann ben Solomon ha-Levi Amelander. See also the poem by Yaakov Tausk, *Eyn shoyn lid fun meshiekh* (Amsterdam, 1666), and in particular the chapter of *Zykhroynes* [Memoirs] by Glückel of Hameln describing the enthusiasm of Jews in Hamburg at the news of the coming of the Messiah, and the depression that followed the apostasy of Sabbatai Zevi. See Leyb ben Otser, *Beshraybung fun shapse-tsevi*, ed. Zalman Shazar (Jerusalem, 1978); Weinreich, *Bilder fun der yidisher literaturgeshikhte*, 219–52; Leo Fuks, "Menahem Man ben Salomo Halevi und sein jiddisches geshichtswerk 'Sche'erit Jisrael,'" *Deutsche Philologie* 100 (1981), 170–86; Turniansky, ed., *Glikl zykhroynes 1691–1709*, 151–5.

[37] The letters are conserved in the National Archives of Oslo (Riksarkivet).

the end of suffering and exile.[38] Among the penitential exercises, such as fasting and acts of "reparation" (*tikkunim*), that spread in Sabbatean circles, we find a manual of repentance, the *Tikkunei teshuve erets tsvi* published in Krakow (undated, *c.* 1666 and 1704; also in Amsterdam, two undated editions and a third in 1701).[39]

Old Yiddish literature bears witness to the broadening cultural horizons of the Jewish people. From Venice, Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Prague, texts circulate as far as eastern Europe, favoring the mobility of ideas and the formation of a common, transnational culture. This circulation of knowledge also creates bridges between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic worlds,[40] as witnessed by the transposition into Yiddish of, among others, the *Shevet Yehuda* by Solomon ibn Verga, the *Menorat ha-Maor* by Isaac Aboab, the *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* by Baḥya ibn Pakuda, and the *Keter Malkhut* by Solomon ibn Gabirol. We see an opening up to the exact sciences and scientific studies in general. This includes such items as travel guides, and didactic manuals of arithmetic, mathematics, or medicine, like the *Beer mayim ḥayyim* by Issachar Teller (Prague, mid seventeenth century), a student of Yosef Delmedigo. This book, breaking with the tradition of medical works imbued with magic, is based on the principles of empirical medicine and the objective observation of symptoms.[41]

At the same time, the separation between religious knowledge and secular texts gradually diminished. Although demarcations still remained between the two domains, we also see forms of porosity and hybridity that attest to the ongoing changes in Jewish society and the birth of a *lay culture*. A number of authors, translators, or adapters published fundamental texts of the traditional culture, as well as works of entertainment devoid of any religious intent. One example is Yosef ben Yaakov Maarssen, who wrote an adaptation of the tales of Boccaccio, the *Sheyne artlekhe geshikhte* (Amsterdam, 1710); an adaptation

[38] Chava Turniansky, "Ha-Targumim ha-Rishonim shel ha-Sefer ha-Yashar le-Yidish," *Tarbiz* 54, 4 (1985), 588–91.

[39] In the collection of *tkhines*, the *Shloyshe sheorim*, Sarah Bas-Tovim has a Yiddish adaptation of a chapter of the work influenced by Sabbateanism, the *Ḥemdat Yamin*; see Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs*, 141–3. In chapter 102 of the *Kav ha-Yashar* (Frankfurt, 1709), Tsvi Hirsh Koidanover makes another allusion to the Sabbatean prophet Hershel Tsoref.

[40] On the transnational Jewish culture by the seventeenth century, see David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010), 99–132.

[41] See Shlomo Berger, *Travels among Jews and Gentiles, Abraham Levies Travelogue Amsterdam, 1764* (Leiden, 2002); Chava Turniansky, "Al Sifrut Didakit be-Yidish be-Amsterdam, 1699–1749," *Meḥkarim al Toldot Yahadut Holand, Studies in the History of Dutch Jewry* 4 (1984) 163–77; Jean Baumgarten, "Un livre de médecine en yiddish, le *Beer mayim ḥayyim* d'Issachar Ber Teller (Prague, seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle)," *Revue des Études Juives* 168 (2009), 103–29.

of the Apocrypha Ben Sira (Amsterdam, 1712); a didactic work, the *Ḥanokh la-naar* (1713); a merchants' manual, the *Tikn sokherim ve-tikn khilufim* (1714); and a bilingual (Yiddish–Hebrew) grammar, the *Loshn zohev* (1715). There is also Yosef ben Alexander Witzenhausen, who translated medieval legends of King Arthur, *Ayn sheyn mayse fun kenig artis hof* (Amsterdam, 1671, 1683) and put out a complete translation of the Bible in Yiddish (1687). We find adaptations or "Judaizations" of Christian tales or epics, *galkhes bikher*, which became widespread by the seventeenth century.[42] The growing production of nonreligious books attests to a secularization, an evolution in the taste, esthetic sensibility, and interest of Jewish readers, in a literature of entertainment like that which circulated in the non-Jewish culture of the time. The printing of secular books laid the groundwork for the later popular reception of Haskalah ideas. It also makes us aware of the cultural foundations for the emergence of modern Jewish literature, with Yiddish adaptations of the great European works, like Fielding's *Tom Jones*, translated by Yosef Perl (1825–38), or the *Bashraybung dos lebns fun robinson krizohe*, an edition of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, published in Metz (1764). Publishing texts of this type shows the evolution of literary tastes, a growing influence of the ideas of the Haskalah, and the permeability of the milieu of enlightened Jews to outside influences, notably to the main currents of European culture. Old Yiddish literature began a gradual decline with the emergence of new types of texts – comedies, melodramas, novels, historic writings, and scientific vulgarizations – and the press took on a growing importance.[43]

The rediscovery, since the 1960s, of numerous manuscripts and printed works in Yiddish, and the literary and sociolinguistic study of these works, have made it possible to reconsider the role of the vernacular in the formation and history of Jewish culture in Europe. The vernacular language contributed to the consolidation of the Ashkenazic culture and the transmission of fundamental aspects of Jewish tradition to the popular segments of the population. The printing and dissemination of many Hebrew texts in the vernacular language[44] participated in the conservation

[42] This term designates the adaptations in Yiddish and the Judaization of Christian novels or epics. See Jerold Frakes, *Early Yiddish Texts 1100–1750* (Oxford, 2004), 432–47, 453–60, 692–713.

[43] Israel Zinberg, *History of Jewish Literature*, vols. VII, VIII, IX (Cincinnati, 1975–6).

[44] We find, among the main types of texts, a few halakhic guidebooks, books of customs, collections of tales, translations and commentaries of the Bible, adaptations of Midrashim, ethical treatises and few mystical books. Some texts are monolingual, like, for example, the homiletic commentary of the Bible, the *Tsene-rene* (Hanau, 1622), the translation of some parts of the Zohar called *Nakhles tsevi* (Frankfurt, 1711), and others are bilingual like, among others, the *Kav ha-Yashar* (Frankfurt, 1705, 1709), the *Menorat ha-Maor* (Amsterdam, 1722) and the *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* (Amsterdam, 1716).

of Jewish values. At the same time, Yiddish literature offers an excellent showcase for observing the changes that accompanied the entry of the Jews into modernity. Many profane texts and didactic literature also started to be translated or created, showing the evolution of the readers' demands and a slow process of secularization. All this textual production paved the way to the cultural and social change that was to take place in the eighteenth century. The Old Yiddish literature could be considered as one – among many others – of the cultural grounds or backgrounds that prepared for the reception, on one hand, of Hasidism and, on the other hand, of the Haskalah.[45]

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[45] At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hasidic and maskilic texts started to be printed and disseminated. The *Shivḥei ha-Besht* was printed four times in Yiddish between 1815 and 1817. The *Sippurei mayses* by Nahman of Bratslav were published in 1815. Around 1816, Yosef Perl started to write, in Hebrew and Yiddish, maskilic parodic tales based on the *Shivḥei ha-Besht.* Between 1825 and 1838, Yosef Perl translated from German into Yiddish parts of *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding. See J. Perl, *Maasiot ve-Iggerot*, ed. Ch. Shmeruk and S. Werses (Jerusalem, 1969); Yosef Perl, *Megale temirin*, ed. Jonathan Meir (Jerusalem, 2013), 520–1, 526–7.

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CHAPTER II

JEWISH BOOK CULTURE SINCE THE INVENTION OF PRINTING (1469 – *c.* 1815)

EMILE G. L. SCHRIJVER

In recent years, a new field of research has emerged, which is usually referred to as "Jewish Book History."[1] Jewish Book History is more than the history of the Jewish book, *stricto sensu*. In the past half-century, the study of the Jewish book has developed from a traditional, descriptive bibliographical discipline into an independent field of research in which the book is studied as an expression of Jewish culture and as an instrument for the transmission of Jewish and non-Jewish knowledge.[2] This development is rooted in a more general trend in cultural history, which aims at an understanding of the role of a variety of media in the transmission of knowledge.[3]

The foundations for this new field of Jewish Book History were laid in medieval book research in the fields of Hebrew codicology and Jewish art. In particular, the leading medievalists Malachi Beit-Arié and Colette Sirat have

[1] A summary of recent research is Adam Shear, "The Jewish Book: Views and Questions," in *The Jewish Book, Published on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Center for Jewish History at the Opening of "The Jewish Book: Past Present Future," The Lilian Goldman Symposium April 3, 2011* (New York, 2011), 4–11 [= *AJS Review* 34, 2 (November 2010), 353–7]. Important new contributions are also: David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010), 99–132, and Joseph R. Hacker and Adam Shear, eds., *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia, 2011). A most recent contribution to the new field is Shlomo Z. Berger, *Producing Redemption in Amsterdam: Early Modern Yiddish Books in Paratextual Perspective* (Leiden, 2013).

[2] Emile G. L. Schrijver, "The Transmission of Jewish Knowledge through MSS and Printed Books," in Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen, eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2010), I, 66–72.

[3] Central to this area of research are the seminal works of the French scholar Pierre Bourdieu and, more recently, the British scholar Peter Burke; see, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York, 1993), and Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge, 2000). A further important contribution is: Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, 1998). The starting point for most of the work on the topic are Elizabeth Eisenstein's seminal publications: Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge, 1979); *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1983); and "An Unacknowledged Revolution Revisited," *The American Historical Review* 107, 1 (2002), 87–105.

defined new fundamental research questions, which are closely related to and often anticipate the current research agenda into non-Jewish medieval books. Their research is based on the study of large corpora of selected primary (mostly but not exclusively dated and/or signed) source material, but it is not limited to descriptive work. They have produced a considerable number of monographs in which more fundamental research questions have been dealt with.[4] A number of other researchers have built on this solid foundation, in particular in the fields of Genizah research[5] and in the study of fragments of Hebrew medieval manuscripts found in the bindings of Hebrew and non-Hebrew manuscripts and printed books and in notarial files.[6]

For the study of the Jewish book in the centuries since the invention of printing, a comparable development may be observed, but the results are not yet as definitive as those achieved for medieval Hebrew manuscripts. Part of the reason for this "intermediate" state of research may be the fact that many questions asked by modern researchers of Jewish Book History were taken from the broader field of Book History and do not take the peculiarities of the Jewish book into full account.[7] The singularity of the Jewish book can only be understood in full if it is studied in its own cultural and intercultural context.

[4] The grand summary of Malachi Beit-Arié's work is his Hebrew *Kodikolgiyah ivrit* of 2012, of which an internet pre-publication is available on the website of the National Library of Israel, www.nli.org. Colette Sirat has recently published a full listing of her publications on her own website, www.colette-sirat.com.

[5] A useful bibliography can be found online at the website of the Taylor–Schechter Cairo Genizah Collection at Cambridge University Library: http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/bibliographies/genizah.

[6] Of particular interest is the project "Books within Books: Hebrew Fragments in European Libraries," initiated and led by Judith Olszowy-Schlanger of Paris: www.hebrewmanuscript.com.

[7] The most important journal of the new field is *Book History*, an annual published since 1998. So far there have only been two contributions on Jewish Book History to the journal: Shlomo Z. Berger, "An Invitation to Buy and Read: Paratexts of Yiddish Books in Amsterdam, 1650–1800," *Book History* 7 (2004), 31–61, and Eva Mroczek, "Thinking Digitally About the Dead Sea Scrolls: Book History Before and Beyond the Book," *Book History* 14 (2011), 241–69. A good impression of the most important research questions in this general field may be gleaned from two recent "companions" to the field: Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, eds., *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Oxford, 2007), and Suarez and Woudhuysen, eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Book*; both volumes contain introductions on the Jewish book by Emile G. L. Schrijver. A first, relatively unbalanced attempt has also been made by Schrijver to raise some of the relevant questions from the general field of Book History for Jewish books, in particular those of the private Braginsky Collection in Zurich, Switzerland. In English: "Of Books and People: The Braginsky Collection and Book History," in Evelyn M. Cohen, Sharon Liberman-Mintz, and Emile G. L. Schrijver, eds., *A Journey through Jewish Worlds: Highlights from the Braginsky Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books* (Zwolle, 2009), 29–33; and, with some relevant improvements, in German: "Ein neues Verständnis jüdischer Schriftkultur und die Braginsky Collection," in Emile Schrijver and

This goes further than a mere application of research questions from the general field of Book History to the Jewish book, or a comparison of certain phenomena found in non-Jewish – usually Christian – books with their Jewish counterparts. Here the term "Jewish book culture" is preferred, therefore, over "Jewish Book History."

This chapter deals with Jewish book culture since the invention of printing, thus excluding the production of Jewish handwritten books, the large majority in Hebrew, before that invention. Such a designation is more appropriate than the classical distinction between medieval and post-medieval Hebrew book production. The invention of printing is one of the late Middle Ages, and in the many centuries since the invention of printing Jews have never stopped producing manuscripts. Since this volume deals with the early modern period, here the introduction of the machine press in the first half of the nineteenth century may serve as a *terminus ante quem*. It must be underscored, however, that this *terminus* is more artificial than the *terminus post quem*. Firstly, almost everywhere in the Jewish diaspora, books were copied by hand until the late nineteenth and even the early twentieth centuries. Secondly, perhaps the most important revolution in Hebrew printed book production of the nineteenth century is not so much the introduction of new printing techniques, but rather the changing roles of the main agents in the book production process, such as authors, editors, printers, publishers, booksellers, and even readers.[8] This occurred over the course of the entire nineteenth century, straddling the 1815 terminal date of this volume and this chapter.

Further terms that need to be explained are the word "book," and the phrase "Jewish book." They are considered here to comprise both manuscripts and printed books, in fact all bound volumes produced by and/or for Jews and/or with a direct Jewish relevance. The often-used distinction between manuscripts and books, referring to handwritten books and printed books, is imprecise; a book is defined by its physical shape, not by the reproduction technique that was used to produce it. Strictly, this definition excludes single-sheet items such as decorated and illuminated marriage contracts and printed broadsides, as well as post-medieval Torah scrolls, Esther scrolls, and other book scrolls, handwritten or printed. Since, however, these items are part of the same Jewish book culture (the German

Falk Wiesemann, eds., *Schöne Seiten. Jüdische Schriftkultur aus der Braginsky Collection* (Zurich, 2011), 24–7.

[8] For this later period, see, for example, Zeev Gries, *The Book in the Jewish World, 1700–1900* (London, 2007), and Michael W. Grunberger, "Publishing and the Rise of Modern Hebrew Literature," in Leonard Singer Gold, ed., *A Sign and a Witness: 2,000 Years of Hebrew Books and Illuminated Manuscripts* (New York, 1988), 114–24.

Schriftkultur is perhaps even more appropriate), they cannot and will not be ignored completely.

The Jewish book has almost always been subclassified into separate entities, defined by a number of modifiers – handwritten or printed, chronological, geographical, decorated, illustrated, etc. This approach is unproductive, since a true understanding of the Jewish book involves a permanent awareness of the complex interrelations between the various techniques, carriers, localities, manufacturers, and so on. There is no such thing as *the* history of Hebrew printed books, just as there is no such thing as *the* history of Hebrew manuscripts after the invention of printing. Hebrew printed books cannot be understood without understanding the contemporary Hebrew manuscript tradition, just as Hebrew manuscripts after the invention of printing cannot be understood without understanding Hebrew printing.

There are further dimensions to consider. Hebrew printed books cannot be understood without understanding Jewish books printed in scripts other than Hebrew, and, likewise, neither can Hebrew manuscripts after the invention of printing be understood without understanding Jewish manuscript books, since the invention of printing, in scripts other than Hebrew. An inward-looking perspective is misleading, because Jews never lived in isolation. Local histories of Hebrew books, printed or handwritten, need to take into consideration the book production, printed or handwritten, of the non-Jewish locale. These cultural interrelations are also important when considering the decoration of texts and the use of images in them, as will be clear from the many examples that will follow. Certainly, until the eighteenth century, book illustration and decoration were among the most prominent and widest-spread expressions of Jewish art. In sum: the history of the Jewish book is as complex and multi-faceted as Jewish history. There are numerous general introductions to the history of the printed Hebrew book and even to the production of Hebrew manuscripts since the invention of printing.[9]

[9] Certainly, one of the most comprehensive surveys is Brad Sabin Hill's "Hebrew Printing," in Geoffrey Khan, ed., *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden, 2013), 233–62. There is special value in Hill's decision to include the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Others are David Stern, with Evelyn M. Cohen and Emile G. L. Schrijver, *Chosen: Philadelphia's Greatest Hebraica* (Philadelphia, 2007); Adri K. Offenberg, "The Spread of Hebrew Printing," in Saskia de Melker, Emile G. L. Schrijver, and Edward van Voolen, eds., *The Image of the Word: Jewish Tradition in Manuscripts and Printed Books: Catalogue of an Exhibition Held at the Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam (14 September – 25 November 1990* (Amsterdam, 1990), 23–32; and Emile G. L. Schrijver, "The Hebraic Book," in Eliot and Rose, eds., *Companion to the History of the Book*, 153–64 – some phrases and thoughts already presented in this, and other introductory articles by Schrijver, have been reused in the present chapter. Also see the various highly informative monographs by Marvin J. Heller, such as *Printing the*

Rather than merely repeating or rephrasing these, this chapter will take the interrelations as a starting point for a new research paradigm, one that takes into account the special nature of Jewish book culture, as well as the latest developments in the field of Book History. The perspective is primarily, but not entirely, diachronic.

THE ADVENT OF HEBREW PRINTING

The earliest Hebrew printed books were produced in Rome between 1469 and 1472/3 and were soon to be followed by some 140 to 150 books printed before January 1, 1501, in other Italian places, in Spain and Portugal, and 1 in Constantinople. The publication of these Hebrew incunabula is the result of conscious decisions by the first printers to print particular texts, for commercial, religious, or other reasons.[10] In the first half of the sixteenth century, Venice, where no Hebrew books were printed in the incunabula period, became the main center of Hebrew printed book production, to be followed by a number of other Italian centers. Inevitably, the printers of these first Hebrew books were in constant need of manuscripts to print from. They stressed the importance of "critical" editions, based on "reliable" manuscripts, and were aware of the necessity to find these.

Born into a family of Antwerp merchants with an interest in printing, Daniël van Bomberghen (before 1483 – 1553), or Daniel Bomberg as he is commonly referred to in Jewish sources, was the most influential Christian printer of Hebrew books in Venice. He worked there, with some breaks, between 1516 and 1549. Among the more than 200 books he produced are the first complete editions of the *Biblia Rabbinica*, the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmudim, and important rabbinic texts. For his 1522–4 edition of the Palestinian Talmud, he claimed to have used a number of manuscripts in order to achieve the best possible text. It was proven more than a century ago, however, that this edition was based almost entirely on one manuscript,

Talmud: A History of the Earliest Printed Editions of the Talmud (Brooklyn, 1992); *Printing the Talmud: A History of the Individual Treatises Printed from 1700 to 1750* (Leiden, 1999); *The Sixteenth-Century Hebrew Book: An Abridged Thesaurus* (Leiden, 2004); *Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book* (Leiden, 2008); and *The Seventeenth-Century Hebrew Book: An Abridged Thesaurus* (Leiden, 2011).

[10] Adri K. Offenberg, *Hebrew Incunabula in Public Collections: A First International Census*, Bibliotheca humanistica et reformatorica 47 (Nieuwkoop, 1990); Adri K. Offenberg, *A Choice of Corals: Facets of Fifteenth-century Hebrew Printing*, Bibliotheca humanistica et reformatorica 52 (Nieuwkoop, 1992); Adri K. Offenberg, *Catalogue of Books Printed in the XVth Century Now in the British Library. BMC Part xiii: Hebraica* ('t Goy-Houten, 2004); Shimon M. Iakerson, *Catalogue of Hebrew Incunabula from the Collection of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary* (New York, 2005).

the manuscript that is now known as the Leiden Yerushalmi.[11] His claim nevertheless shows a text-critical awareness and sense of editorial and redactional responsibility, and his edition would set the standard for many generations, even if these high standards were not always reached. Bomberg's was also one of the first printing offices in which Jewish and non-Jewish specialists worked together intensively, an example that would soon be followed in the most important centers of humanist printing: Basel, Geneva, Isny, Konstanz and Paris.

The case of the Bomberg edition and the Leiden manuscript of the Palestinian Talmud shows how the intricacies of the transmission of medieval Hebrew manuscripts had an enormous influence on the nature of the printed text and on its subsequent century-long reception by a worldwide Jewish readership. In his colophon to the original manuscript, kept in Leiden University Library and finished on Thursday, February 17, 1289 in Rome, the scribe, of what is today the only extant complete medieval manuscript of the Palestinian Talmud, reports that he had felt compelled to correct the text since the copy from which he had been working was full of mistakes. He apologizes for any mistakes of his own:

> I, Jehiel, son of Rabbi Jekutiel, son of Rabbi Benjamin Ha-Rofe, of blessed memory, have copied this Talmud Yerushalmi . . . and I copied it from a corrupt and faulty exemplar and what I was able to understand and comprehend I corrected to the best of my knowledge. And I am fully aware that I did not reach at all the corruptions and faults I found in that copy, and not even half of them. And may therefore the reader of this book who will find corruptions and faults therein judge me according to my merit and not blame me for all of them. And may the Lord, in His mercy, forgive me my sins and cleanse me from my errors, as it is said (Psalms 19:13): "Who can be aware of errors, clear me of unperceived guilt."[12]

Today Bomberg's edition of the Palestinian Talmud is as authoritative as it has been since its appearance in the first half of the sixteenth century. It is, though, very important to realize that this printed text of the Palestinian Talmud is based on a medieval manuscript that its original scribe claimed to have "corrected to the best of [his] knowledge."

That the Bomberg family owned Hebrew manuscripts becomes clear from an inscription in an early fifteenth-century Italian manuscript of the Aphorisms and Prognostics of Hippocrates of Kos (fifth century BCE) in an anonymous Hebrew translation, with a commentary on the Aphorisms by

[11] Solomon M. Schiller-Szinessy, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts Preserved in the University Library, Cambridge* [. . .] (Cambridge, 1876), appendix.

[12] Quoted after: Emile G. L. Schrijver, "Hebrew Manuscripts through the Ages," in de Melker *et al.*, eds., *The Image of the Word*, 13.

Moses da Rieti (1388–1460). This is now held in the Special Collections of the University of Amsterdam (HS VI E 7). The manuscript was acquired by the City Library of Amsterdam between 1608 and 1612 from the collection of the Amsterdam preacher Wernerus Helmichius (1551–1608). As testified by a Hebrew inscription in the manuscript, Helmichius had apparently received it as a gift from Cornelius van Bomberghen (1533/6–77), a cousin of Daniel Bomberg and a business partner of the famous Antwerp printer Christopher Plantin. It is not unlikely that Cornelius received or inherited the manuscript from his cousin Daniel, who had died on December 21, 1553. Daniel Bomberg had returned to Antwerp at the end of his life and took with him most of his professional material. In later years, the Plantin press would print books "with the Hebrew letters of Bomberg," as claimed on their title pages, which is ample proof of Bomberg's life-long Antwerp connections.[13]

HEBREW PRINTING AND THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION

The first printers of Hebrew books – not only of incunabula (the 140–50 editions that appeared before January 1, 1501), but also of books in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – had always been aware of the strength of the Hebrew manuscript tradition. Printers need letters and, for the design of their letters, as well as for the design of their pages, the early printers of Hebrew books took their inspiration, and their technical standards, from the manuscript tradition.[14] One of the clearest examples of this is the case of Menasseh ben Israel, the first Jew to print in Hebrew in Amsterdam. In the preface to Menasseh's first publication, a 1627 daily prayer book, the corrector Isaac Aboab da Fonseca wrote:

> Menasseh ben Joseph ben Israel, seeing the Bomberg types worn out, and since nothing can be imperfect for the Holy Work, arose from within the community and went out, and came to the house of an artisan. And behold, he was standing there at his work, the tools of his trade in his hand. He said to him: behold, the money is given to you and the shapes of the letters to make as is good in the eyes of

[13] Emile G. L. Schrijver, "Het eerste Hebreeuwse handschrift in Amsterdam," in J. de Roos, A. Schippers, and J. W. Wesselius, eds., *Driehonderd jaar Oosterse talen in Amsterdam. Een verzameling opstellen* (Amsterdam, 1986), 13–24; and Emile G. L. Schrijver, "Towards a Supplementary Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana: Theory and Practice" (Ph.D. diss., Amsterdam, 1993), 120–3, no. 30.

[14] Malachi Beit-Arié, "The Relationship between Early Hebrew Printing and Handwritten Books: Attachment or Detachment," published with Addenda and Corrigenda in Beit-Arié, *The Makings of the Medieval Hebrew Book: Studies in Palaeography and Codicology* (Jerusalem, 1993), 251–77.

the honorable and respected Michael Judah, first among the scribes, may the Lord consummate his work and may his reward from the Lord God of Israel be complete. The man swore in real writing to make them for him and for no other man. He shaped them with a burin and made them good to look at and fine to read, as perfect as if cast in gold. And there were two men who were amazed to see the completeness of the work and its beauty. It lifted up their hearts to bring to the work of printing a little Siddur, the like of which had never been since there were printers on the earth.[15]

The fact that the local scribe Michael Judah Leon had to approve of the quality of what would later become known as the famous "Otiyyot Amsterdam" (the "Letters of Amsterdam") is a clear indication of the technical and maybe even religious superiority attributed to the art of writing by hand, and of the value that the intellectual elite in Amsterdam attached to a true Sephardic character of the local Hebrew script. That ideology was indeed a factor in the choice of Hebrew script in Sephardic Amsterdam is also clear from the semicursive scripts used by the local Amsterdam calligraphers. They deliberately chose the most typically Sephardic semicursive hand in existence, the book hand of late medieval Spain, which they imitated painstakingly in their samples of Hebrew calligraphy.[16] The selection of a medieval Iberian/Sephardic semicursive book hand, where other more contemporary, but esthetically less appealing and in a way esthetless traditional, scripts could have been chosen, is clear proof of a deliberate political choice. Michael Judah Leon's involvement in the design of the square printed letters confirms this. For the printed texts, this had the secondary effect that the Sephardic script would become the standard in the world of Hebrew printing, including in the Ashkenazic world, but the intended local effect was different. The strong Iberian/Sephardic choices testify to a conscious policy to strengthen the specific Jewish identity of the community, not only by means of polemical texts, but also by means of a deliberate, conservative choice for particular types of script in which these written testimonies were to convince the projected audience.

[15] Quoted after John Lane, "Nicolaes Briot and Menasseh ben Israel's First Hebrew Types," in A. K. Offenberg, E. G. L. Schrijver, and F. J. Hoogewoud, eds., *Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana: Treasures of Jewish Booklore Marking the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Leeser Rosenthal, 1794–1994* (Amsterdam, 1994), 26–9. The Hebrew text appears in Wytze Gs. Hellinga, *Kopij en Druk in de Nederlanden: Atlas bij de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse typografie* (Amsterdam, 1962), illus. 96.

[16] Compare, for example, the letters of Matatiah de Ishack Aboab as published in Emile G. L. Schrijver, "On Matatia de Ishack Aboab (1672–1703) and his calligraphic art," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 26 (1992), 193–201, with the 1480 Villalon de Campos samples as published by Ada Yardeni in her *The Book of Hebrew Script* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1991), 217, illus. 34.

It is certain that Hebrew manuscripts were also held in great esteem by printers because an authoritative manuscript exemplar for a printed edition will have functioned as a *kashrut* certificate, so to speak, for the edition.[17] In a later period than that of the previous examples, the adherents of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, elevated the status of Sephardic manuscripts of the Middle Ages even to the extent that they considered them of superior and more authentic quality than other primary sources. This is shown by the presence of large numbers of medieval Sephardic manuscripts in the collections of such prominent *maskilim* as David Itzig of Berlin, and it becomes particularly clear in a *cause célèbre* in the history of the Hebrew book, the work *Besamim Rosh* by Saul of Berlin.[18]

Saul ben Zevi Hirsh of Berlin is considered one of the most brilliant and most controversial scholars of his period. His father was Zevi Hirsh Levin, a direct relative of the Hakham Zevi, who until his death in 1800 was held in great esteem as the chief rabbi of Berlin. Already in his youth Saul was a talmudic scholar of some repute, serving as the chief rabbi of Frankfurt an der Oder from 1768 until 1792. He left the rabbinate because he was disappointed with the intellectual level of his colleagues. His name is connected with a number of unconventional publications, printed under falsified authorships and displaying revolutionary modernist approaches to classical rabbinic studies. His most (in)famous work, "Spices of the Rosh," was published in Berlin in 1793 and is a collection of halakhic responsa, written in the style of the *pilpul*, the very traditional over-meticulous study of the law which Saul of Berlin despised. He claimed that the text was written by the medieval scholar Asher ben Jehiel, the Rosh, who was born in Germany but was active mainly in Spain in the first quarter of the fourteenth century. He mentions that the text is based on an old manuscript, which he had bought in Italy. Even during his lifetime, it became clear that the content came from the mind of an eighteenth-century reformer, and it did not take Saul of Berlin's many enemies long to identify him as the author. Shortly after his unmasking, he decided to flee to his brother in London, where he died on November 16, 1794. What is particularly relevant here is the fact that Saul tried to lend his work additional authority by claiming it was based on an old manuscript by a

[17] Nevertheless, Shlomo Berger's recent observation that for Yiddish printed books the manuscript sources are generally unknown is quite relevant here, and the extent to which this is true of books other than those in Yiddish needs further research: Berger, *Producing Redemption in Amsterdam*, 1.

[18] See Emile G. L. Schrijver, "Saul of Berlin's 'Besamim Rosh': the Maskilic Appreciation of Medieval Knowledge," in Resianne Fontaine, Andrea Schatz, and Irene Zwiep, eds., *Sepharad in Ashkenaz* (Amsterdam, 2007), 249–59, in particular the appendix, 255–9.

medieval Ashkenazic scholar who was associated with the intellectual heydays of medieval Sepharad.[19]

It is clear, then, that the production of Hebrew printed books cannot be studied without an understanding of the role of manuscripts. But the opposite is also true. It is obvious that the almost omnipresence of numerous printed copies of Jewish works had an enormous impact on the production of Jewish manuscripts. It is only natural that manuscripts would soon become less prominent as a primary source of knowledge. Why would numerous versions of major rabbinical texts still be copied by hand if cheaper printed editions were readily available? It is a major misconception, nevertheless, that Hebrew manuscripts disappeared completely.

One of the most interesting questions that hovers above this field is how many copies of Hebrew books circulated in the Jewish world in the early modern period. Regretfully, there are no reliable quantitative data available, but the catalogue of the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem (NLI), which may at least be considered to be a representative collection of Hebrew manuscripts and printed books, might be tried nevertheless as a source with some statistical value.[20] In 2012, the online catalogue of the NLI listed more than 90,000 Hebrew manuscripts produced between 1469 and 1860. Adjusting this figure to account for duplicates and other factors, an educated guess for the number of extant manuscripts from the above period is 40-50,000.[21] For the same period, almost 22,000 printed editions are listed. It is very difficult to come up with a reliable assessment of the number of copies of Hebrew printed books that have existed, since this assessment will have to be based on an assumed average number of copies per edition. If this is set at a conservative 300 copies per edition, the total number of printed books that will have circulated anywhere in the Jewish world over a period of nearly 400 years adds up to some 6.5 million printed books.

[19] A further example is the use of manuscripts from David Oppenheim's unsurpassed private collection for printed editions. In his unpublished 2012 dissertation, Joshua Teplitsky discusses David Oppenheim's own active role in this process: J. Z. Teplitsky, "Between Court Jew and Jewish Court: David Oppenheim, the Prague Rabbinate, and Eighteenth-Century Jewish Political Culture" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2012), 221–58. I am grateful to Joshua Teplitsky for putting his dissertation at my disposal.

[20] For the sake of clarity and ease of retrieval, the numbers of printed books present in the databases of the NLI were chosen over those in Yeshayahu Vinograd's *Thesaurus of the Hebrew Book* (Jerusalem, 1993), since the NLI catalogue now also incorporates the Hebrew Bibliography Project and may be considered sufficiently representative for the purpose of these trial statistics.

[21] This number is quoted on the authority of Benjamin Richler of the NLI. I am grateful to Benjamin Richler and to Yisrael Dubitsky of the National Library of Israel for their efforts in providing me with these data.

It is almost impossible to break down these very general quantitative data into shorter periods of time, certainly for manuscripts. For Hebrew printing, it can be assumed that, between 1501 and 1600, approximately 1,800 titles were printed, adding up to 1,800 × 300 = 540,000 printed copies; between 1601 and 1700, 2,200 titles were printed, adding up to 2,200 × 300 = 660,000 printed copies; between 1701 and 1800, 6,600 titles were printed, adding up to 6,600 × 300 = 1.98 million printed copies; between 1801 and 1860, 11,000 titles were printed, adding up to 11,000 × 300 = 3.3 million printed copies.

Clearly, the value of these pseudo-statistics is extremely limited. It is certainly more likely that a manuscript will have survived the ages than a printed book, but there is no way to know, or even guess, exact figures. It is not known how many copies of the assumed 6.6 million printed books survived the ages (it is known that the 40–50,000 manuscripts survived); neither is it known how many manuscripts got lost across the centuries, or in which century they did so. Furthermore, we have no clue how long all the printed copies survived, and when (and where) the copies that can be assumed to have disappeared did, in fact, disappear. It makes sense that the production of Hebrew manuscripts will have been still considerable in the sixteenth century (2–3 percent of all available books on the basis of the data available in the NLI catalogue), but less than half of that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nonetheless, an estimated number of 15–20,000 Hebrew manuscripts from the eighteenth century, by way of example, presents 15–20,000 unique versions of texts; compared to the 6,600 unique printed editions in that same period, that is anything but a *quantité négligeable*, certainly in light of the role of the book in the transmission of Jewish knowledge.

The most striking examples of the influence of the Hebrew printing tradition on the production of Hebrew manuscripts are the works of what is known as the Central and Northern European eighteenth-century school of manuscript decoration. These were usually smaller liturgical books, such as Passover *Haggadot*, Books of Psalms, prayer books for the Sabbath, and smaller collections of occasional prayers, such as *Omer* calendars, circumcision manuals, and a few *Perek Shirah* manuscripts. The manuscripts were usually commissioned by upper- and middle-class Jews, whose names appear on many title and dedication pages. The manuscripts vary greatly in artistic quality.

This revival of Hebrew manuscript decoration was initiated in 1712 by an accomplished Moravian scribe in Vienna, Aryeh ben Judah Leib of Trebitsch. Between 1712 and 1714, he copied a daily prayer book which is now in the Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York (MS

9340; figure 11.1).[22] This must be considered the first manuscript produced during the revival. Today some dozen manuscripts of his are known, among which at least five are daily prayer books. Aryeh ben Judah Leib is the first recorded scribe to have written his manuscripts "with Amsterdam letters." Title pages of books printed outside Amsterdam in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries often contained a statement that the books were printed with Amsterdam letters, as an indication of quality. These printed books usually have the word "Amsterdam" printed prominently on the title page, whereas the actual place of printing is printed in much smaller type, or even at the very end of the book. Aryeh ben Judah Leib transposed this custom to manuscripts. As a number of his manuscripts contain images that were printed onto the parchment on which he wrote the text, it can be assumed that he was involved in the printing industry (even though there was no Hebrew printing in Vienna at the time). That is also true of another prominent Viennese scribe of the period, Meshullam Zimmel ben Moses of Polna, who often refers to himself as a "copper engraver" and whose drawn images do indeed resemble copper engravings and etchings (figure 11.2).

From Bohemia and Moravia, the fashion spread over southern Germany, Alsace and northern Germany, whereas the northern Netherlands only joined the picture later in the century. With the exception of a number of manuscripts produced in Rotterdam by the Moravian scribe Nathan ben Simson of Meseritz, there almost all manuscripts were produced in the second half of the century. Some 500 manuscripts produced during the eighteenth-century revival are still extant.[23]

[22] See Emile G. L. Schrijver, "Some Superb Examples of Eighteenth-Century Viennese Penmanship: The Manuscripts of Aryeh Judah Leib of Trebitsch," in Ulf Haxen, H. Trautner-Kromann, and K. L. Goldschmidt-Salamon, eds., *Jewish Studies in a New Europe: Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of Jewish Studies under the Auspices of the European Association for Jewish Studies* (Copenhagen, 1998), 732–44.

[23] See Ernest M. Naményi, "La miniature juive au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue des Études Juives* 116 (1957), 27–71; Ernest M. Naményi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Inventing of Printing," in C. Roth, *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, rev. edn. Bezalel Narkiss (Greenwich, CT, 1971), 149–62; U. Schubert, *Jüdische Buchkunst*, vol. 2 (Graz, 1992). Up-to-date discussions of the work of the most important scribe/artists of the period may be found throughout the two printed catalogues of the Braginsky Collection in Zurich: Cohen *et al.*, eds., *A Journey Through Jewish Worlds*, and Emile G. L. Schrijver and Falk Wiesemann, eds., *Schöne Seiten. Jüdische Schriftkultur aus der Braginsky Collection* (Zurich, 2011); now also see Falk Wiesemann (in cooperation with Emile Schrijver), *Die Estherrolle von Wolf Poppers aus dem Jahr 1746 – ein Meisterwerk jüdischer Buchkunst wiederentdeckt* [German, English, French, and Hebrew] (Cologne, 2012).

Figure 11.1 *Siddur* [Daily Prayers], printed decorated border with handwritten text. Vienna, Aryeh ben Judah Leib of Trebitsch, 1712–14.

Figure 11.2 *Perek Shirah* [Chapter of Song]. Vienna, Meshullam Zimmel ben Moses of Polna (Bohemia), 1719.

Part of the explanation for the renewed interest in Hebrew manuscript decoration in Germanic court circles, and subsequently in the Germanic lands in general, certainly lies in the fact that well-off Jews were experiencing court life, where great emphasis was laid on the possession of books and well-kept libraries. Apart from the fact that scribes responded to the thus growing demand for manuscripts among the well-to-do, there may have been a political reason as well for the increasing popularity of Hebrew manuscript decoration outside the Bohemian/Moravian region. In 1726–7, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI issued the so-called Familiants Law, which aimed at limiting Jewish presence in the Empire. This law resulted in a considerable migration of Bohemian and Moravian Jews to other Germanic lands and to the northern Netherlands. Among the emigrating Jews were indeed some of the manuscript artists. This does not explain, though, the popularity of Hebrew manuscript decoration in the area around Hamburg in the first half of the eighteenth century, where Jacob ben Judah Leib Shammas, or Jacob Sofer, started working as early as in 1718, or even 1717, and during his long career of almost twenty-five years was joined by a number of colleagues.[24]

[24] For an excellent discussion of the Hamburg/Altona school, see Iris Fishof, *Jüdische Buchmalerei in Hamburg und Altona. Zur Geschichte der Illumination hebräischer Handschriften im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 1999).

An interesting side-effect of the popularity of printed Amsterdam Sephardic letters is the fact that this is the first time in Jewish history Ashkenazic scribes copied Sephardic scripts, at least in their books, Esther scrolls, and various single-sheet manuscripts. Torah scrolls, and usually also Hebrew script appearing in synagogal settings (in wall paintings, on textiles, or on ritual objects) are not part of this trend. And also, more generically, the Ashkenazic handwritten script of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tends to develop more and more toward the Sephardic, even in cases in which such a comparison was not intended, undoubtedly under the influence of the prominence of Sephardic script in printing.

Hebrew manuscripts after the invention of printing should always be studied in connection with printed books for technical reasons too. Many books – or, better, products of Jewish book culture – combine the techniques of production of both manuscripts and printed books. The first books of the eighteenth-century school of manuscript decoration, which contain printed decorative title page frames, have already been mentioned here. These are preceded by some seventy years, however, by a number of *megillot* ("Esther scrolls") that have printed decorative borders and handwritten texts. Similarly, there are a number of Ketubbot ("decorated marriage contracts") that display a mixed technique like this.

The most famous artist associated with this type of mixed-technique object is Salom Italia (1618/19 – after 1664). He was born in Italy, worked in Amsterdam in the 1640s, and created a number of printed borders for *megillot* and Ketubbot, most likely for a market of local Sephardim. His designs reflected the amalgam of cultures of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, with clear Italian (his own), Iberian, and particularly local Dutch influences. He is also known to have drawn at least two entirely handmade Esther scrolls, for which, however, he most likely did not write the Hebrew texts.[25]

Another, Christian, artist involved with the production of printed borders for *megillot* – which, like the work of Salom Italia, would be sold without text and would then be written by hand – is Francesco Griselini (1717–87), who worked in Venice in the eighteenth century. His Esther scroll, one of a number of Judaica items he made, is a masterpiece

[25] The most recent, thorough discussion of Salom Italia's Esther scrolls is Sharon Assaf and Emily D. Bilski, *Salom Italia's Esther Scrolls and the Dutch Golden Age* (Amsterdam, [2011]). A discussion of a recently surfaced handmade scroll by Salom Italia, which is now in the Braginsky Collection in Zurich, is Shalom Sabar, "A New Discovery: the Earliest Illustrated Esther Scroll by Salom Italia," *Ars Judaica* 8 (2012), 119–36. The scroll is also described by Sharon Liberman-Mintz and Elka Deitsch in Schrijver and Wiesemann, eds., *Schöne Seiten*, 274–7, no. 86.

Figure 11.3 Esther scroll, printed decorated border designed by Francesco Griselini, with handwritten text. Venice, 1746.

of eighteenth-century engraving and a source of inspiration for many artists to follow (figure 11.3).[26]

And yet another interesting use of two techniques is a famous single-sheet manuscript from the collection of the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam. It is a marriage poem, entitled *Otot ha-'Ahavah*, and was finished in Amsterdam in 1748 (figure 11.4).[27] It has splendid painted decoration and was clearly produced as a gift for the couple, or perhaps for the bride. The guests at the wedding were apparently presented a printed, monochrome version of the poem, with identical decoration, of which the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana also holds a copy. On a different level, this is also an indication of the special value attached in the Jewish tradition to things handwritten – especially, but not exclusively, in Hebrew.

[26] Sharon Liberman-Mintz and Elka Deitsch in Cohen *et al.*, eds., *A Journey Through Jewish Worlds*, 242–5, no. 85.

[27] It was published more than once, for example in de Melker, Schrijver, and van Voolen, eds., *The Image of the Word*, 77, no. 110 (image on p. 65).

Figure 11.4 *Otot ha-'Ahavah* [Signs of Love], Hebrew manuscript on paper. Amsterdam, 1748.

So far, only deliberate decisions to produce books or other objects by hand in the period of printing have been discussed. Often, however, difficult social circumstances have forced Jewish readers – not scribes – to copy printed books manually. This was quite often the case in the Middle East, where

printed books were in constant demand. There are the famous legendary stories of the best pupils of Yemenite teachers who would be better at reading their Hebrew texts upside down, because they would always stand opposite the teacher around the one printed book that was available. There is also the Yemenite custom described by Yosef Kafih, in which pupils in writing classes in Yemen would copy smaller prayer books as writing exercises, resulting in another copy of a book that would subsequently be used as such.[28] There is also the really touching case, described recently by Menaḥem Schmelzer, of the originally Yemenite scholar Solomon Adeni (b. 1567), who lived in great poverty in Hebron. For decades, he worked on a commentary on the Mishnah, which he originally wrote in the margins of a printed copy that he owned. It was only after a patron provided him with paper that he was able to make his commentary into a coherent work, part of which is now in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, with another part in the Braginsky Collection in Zurich.[29]

This phenomenon, the forced writing of texts by hand because printed versions were extremely rare, is also attested in *Genizot* throughout the German-speaking countryside of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Falk Wiesemann described a number of such cases, and further, largely unpublished, finds have been made since the late 1990s.[30]

JEWISH PRINTING IN VERNACULAR LANGUAGES

Jews did not just publish in Jewish languages. They also used the vernacular languages, to write – exemplified by the Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Italian manuscripts produced during the Middle Ages – and to print. Some of the best examples of Jewish printing in a non-Jewish language are in Spanish. The most famous example from the sixteenth century is the famous *Biblia en lengua Española*, in Latin script, published in Ferrara in 1553, which was followed by a fair number of other Spanish-language printed books in Italy. This custom was transferred to Antwerp and later the northern Netherlands (especially Dordrecht, and later Amsterdam), where hundreds of Spanish works were published from 1583 until the first

[28] Y. Kafih, "Kotvei u-Maatike Sefarim be-Teman," *Mahanayim* 106 (1966), 152–7, esp. 155.

[29] Menaḥem Schmelzer, in Cohen *et al.*, eds., *A Journey Through Jewish Worlds*, 92–3, no. 29.

[30] Falk Wiesemann, *Genizah – Hidden Legacies of the German Village Jews: An Exhibition by The Hidden Legacy Foundation* [English and German] (Munich, 1992), and, more recently, Andreas Lehnardt and Elisabeth Singer, "Religiöse Handschriften," in Falk Wiesemann, ed., *Zeugnisse jüdischen Lebens in Niederzissen. Genisa-Funde in der ehemaligen Synagoge* (Niederzissen, 2012), 33–48.

quarter of the nineteenth century.[31] Hamburg, and to a certain extent London, may be considered satellite cities of Amsterdam in this respect. Printing in Spanish was a phenomenon of the western Sephardim. Sephardim of the east printed in Ladino, in Hebrew characters (in the eighteenth century, Livorno would become a major center for this). Likewise, Italian Jews published books in Italian and German Jews in German (although generally not before the nineteenth century). The decision to publish in a particular language, in a particular script, or even to publish bilingual editions, in one or more scripts, was always the result of a conscious decision by an author, a publisher, or a group of intellectuals or other stakeholders.

The same is true of the early modern production of manuscripts by Jews, in Spanish and Italian, in Latin script. There are hundreds of such manuscripts and they have hardly been studied. These manuscripts might be translations of parts of the Bible or prayers, which was often the case in both Spanish and Italian, or literary texts, or even ego documents (for example, the works of Leone Modena[32]), or they can be polemical texts (in defense of Judaism against Christianity), which were particularly popular in Amsterdam, Hamburg, and London. It is a laudable development that many of these manuscripts have now become available in digital form, enabling scholars to become increasingly aware of their research potential. Examples of these are the recent web publications of non-Hebrew Jewish manuscripts by Ets Haim / Livraria Montezinos in Amsterdam[33] and by Columbia University in New York.[34] Nevertheless, a systematic overview of these manuscripts is a major desideratum in Jewish studies.

Manuscripts in non-Jewish languages not produced by Jews are of potential importance to the study of Jewish manuscripts as well. This is true of the so-called *Stammbücher* – family registers, often luxuriously

[31] See Adri Offenberg, "Exame das tradições: een bibliografisch onderzoek naar de publikaties van de eerste Sefardim in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, met name in Amsterdam (1584–1627)," in R. Kistemaker and T. Levie, eds., *Êxodo. Portugezen in Amsterdam 1600–1680* (Amsterdam, 1987), 56–63; Adri Offenberg, "Spanish and Portuguese Sephardi Books Published in the Northern Netherlands before Menasseh ben Israel (1584–1627)," in *Dutch Jewish History: Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands, Jerusalem, November 25–28, 1991*, vol. III (Jerusalem, 1993), 77–90; Harm den Boer, *La literatura sefardí de Amsterdam* (Alcalá de Henares, 1997); Harm den Boer, *Spanish and Portuguese Printing in the Northern Netherlands, 1584–1825: Descriptive Bibliography* (Leiden, 2003).

[32] See, e.g., Mark R. Cohen, ed., *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leone Modena's Life of Judah* (Princeton, 1988).

[33] www.etshaimmanuscripts.nl.

[34] A glimpse of the wealth of that collection is provided by https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/hebrew_mss.

decorated, copied by hand, with naïve, folkish illustrations – which were very popular in bourgeois circles in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germanic countries. The illustrations contained in these texts are often much more similar to illustrated Jewish books of the period than to the higher-quality Christian art books. This is also true of the calligraphy in Spanish and Italian that was popular among the Jews of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This calligraphy was used by Jews not just for decorative purposes: many polemical books in Spanish (especially in Amsterdam, Hamburg, and London) were copied by hand out of fear of the local authorities, but their very execution, and the particular appreciation for the art of writing they embody, can only be understood in full when taking into account the popularity of calligraphy in the non-Jewish surrounding cultures.

The same is true, of course, of the printing industry. Jews were part of their surrounding culture, and from the very beginning of Hebrew printing Jewish and non-Jewish printers have worked together. The clearest example of this is the humanist interest in the study of the Hebrew language and of Jewish sources, which is a phenomenon of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. As already mentioned above, this led to hundreds of Hebrew (and even Yiddish) publications, both in major humanist centers such as Basle, Geneva, and Paris, and in minor centers, such as Konstanz and Isny. These works were almost always the result of a close cooperation between Christians and Jews. Also later, in Amsterdam, in Germany, in Italy, and in many other less important centers, Hebrew publications were the result of such collaborations. It is important to realize, too, that many of these craftsmen, whether they were printers, typesetters, or involved in some other way, often played a significant part in the publication of non-Jewish books for non-Jewish markets as well. A proper understanding of the non-Jewish book industry of a particular city or region is therefore vital for an understanding of Jewish book production in that same area.

This story of close cooperation, however, does not mean that the Jewish book always existed harmoniously alongside the Christian book. There are many examples of anti-Jewish measures against Jewish books, the most obvious being the Italian Inquisition's interest in Hebrew publications. The Catholic Church has always taken great interest in defining and identifying heretics and their followers. This increased after the invention of printing, which enabled a much wider dissemination of presumed heretical ideas, and Jews came under particular scrutiny. On September 9, 1553, after Pope Julius III had decreed that all copies of the Talmud in Rome be gathered, thousands of these and other Jewish books were set alight in the Campo de' Fiori. These public events were part of a strategy

that developed in the 1540s and 1550s, and resulted in the banning and burning of larger numbers of Jewish and non-Jewish heretical books. On September 12, 1553, another papal decree was issued, demanding that all copies of the Talmud throughout the Catholic world be gathered and destroyed. In Venice, then the world center of Hebrew printing, the order was interpreted to include other Jewish books as well. Not long after these acts of public aggression, from the second half of the sixteenth century onward, Christian censors in Italy, often converts, checked Hebrew books and signed them, often after expurgating passages considered hostile to Christianity. As a result, there are hardly any books, handwritten or printed, from Italy in that period that do not contain the signature of one or more censors (figure 11.5). Although it is important to realize that the Jews were never prevented from reading their own literature *per se*, it goes without saying that this external censorship led to a variety of forms of internal censorship, avoidance of complex themes, and adaptation, and thus had an enormous influence on "the shaping of the Jewish canon in the sixteenth century."[35]

CONCLUSION

Hopefully the preceding overview of interrelations existing within early modern Jewish book culture has shown the great potential of these new perspectives, when compared to the more traditional bibliographical view of Jewish book culture after the invention of printing. Traditional non-Jewish analytical bibliography has served textual criticism – e.g., the study of editions of Shakespeare – whereas the traditional bibliographical approach to Jewish books has hardly ever resulted in anything beyond lists and listings. These results can still serve as a good basis for researching many of the new questions raised here but it has become clear, hopefully, that it is necessary to stretch the boundaries of the field considerably.[36]

Apart from the various research topics and angles discussed here already, there are further possible, and necessary, areas of research. The transmission, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, of Jewish mystical

[35] Now see Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 2007). Although outdated, William Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books* (New York, 1899), is still informative.

[36] It is worthwhile to look beyond the borders of the field, to the work of Roger Chartier, for example, who has discussed many of the angles that have been discussed here too. His approach is vital to an understanding of Jewish post-medieval books; see, for example, his highly informative "The Order of Books Revisited," *Modern Intellectual History* 4, 3 (2007), 509–19.

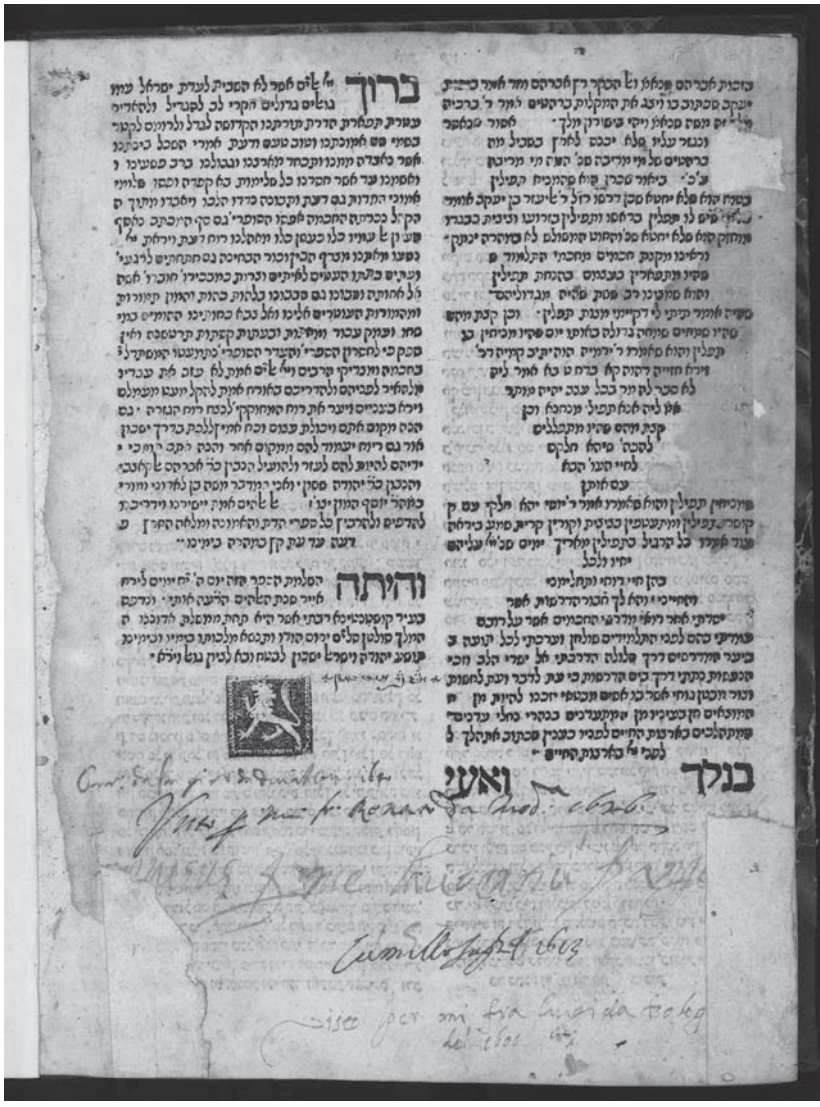

Figure 11.5 Baḥya ben Asher, *Kad ha-Kemaḥ* [Jar of Flour], with five different censors' signatures: Camillo Jaghel, Luigi da Bologna 1600, Laurentius Franguellus, Renato da Modena 1626, and Girolamo da Durazzano 1640. Constantinople, no printer, 1515.

knowledge largely through manuscripts, and the canonizing of certain kabbalistic texts through the preparation of printed editions, is now beginning to be understood.[37] Connected with that, but not restricted to mystical texts, are ongoing studies of the strategies underlying the circulation of printed books and manuscripts, as well as interventions by various cultural elites.[38] An important new topic is the borrowing of illustrations, between Jewish printed books, between Jewish and non-Jewish printed books, between Jewish printed books and Jewish and non-Jewish manuscripts, and between Jewish manuscripts and Jewish and non-Jewish printed books. The study of ephemeral publications, such as broadsides, single-sheet manuscripts, brochures, and so on, is gradually developing, and the birth of a Jewish press and the emergence of journals have now been studied in quite some detail. Likewise, the printing of maps and printing on parchment, tinted papers, and textiles, mostly silk, have received considerable recent scholarly attention, especially through the efforts of Brad Sabin Hill.[39]

Other points of view, not necessarily related, need further development: the study of rabbinical approbations in printed books, the influence on Jewish book culture of the transition from the hand press to the machine press, the emergence of Jewish publishing houses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the issue of taste and relative quality in decorated Jewish manuscripts and printed books. This list can easily be extended. More vital, however, than summing up all these potential areas of research is the realization that further stratification of the study of Jewish book culture is necessary, geographically and chronologically. The goal for the near future should be an attempt to integrate the various histories of Jewish books since the invention of printing, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the transmission of Jewish knowledge, or information, through its various media. This is a massive task but important first steps have been made already and promising new research is in preparation.

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[37] Now see Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem, 2010).

[38] See note 1, as well as other publications by the authors and editors mentioned there.

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CHAPTER 12

THE CHRISTIAN STUDY OF JUDAISM IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

THEODOR DUNKELGRÜN

In the summer of 1522, a few weeks after the death of the German scholar and jurist Johannes Reuchlin, Erasmus published a colloquy titled *The Apotheosis of that Incomparable Worthy, Johann Reuchlin*. In the dialog, one Brassicanus tells his friend Pompilius the sad news. An unnamed Franciscan, modeled on the Hebrew scholar Konrad Pellikan (1478–1556), apprised Brassicanus of Reuchlin's death and related a vision he had had. As he stood by a little bridge over a creek amid undulating meadows, a radiant Reuchlin passed by, greeting him in Hebrew. Then a beaming St. Jerome appeared, telling Reuchlin, "I have been appointed to receive you and conduct you to the heavenly fellowship that the divine goodness has ordained for your sacred labors." Hand in hand, Reuchlin and Jerome ambled through the fields, and upon reaching the top of a hill, "they embraced and kissed each other affectionately."

> And meanwhile the sky overhead parted asunder, displaying an inexpressible majesty. [. . .] From the opening in the sky descended a great pillar of fire, dazzling but beautiful. By this means, those two most holy souls, clasping each other, were conveyed to heaven, accompanied by such ravishing music of angelic choirs that the Franciscan swore he could never recall its delight without bursting into tears. A wonderful fragrance followed them.

Then Brassicanus prays "O God thou lover of mankind, who through thy chosen servant Johann Reuchlin hast renewed to the world the gift of tongues by which thou didst once from heaven, through thy Holy Spirit, instruct the apostles for the preaching of the Gospel, grant that all men

This chapter is deeply indebted to many conversations with Piet van Boxel, Karen Collis, Anthony Grafton, Nick Hardy, Maoz Kahana, Jonathan Karp, Scott Mandelbrote, Dirk van Miert, Jesús de Prado Plumed, Elchanan Reiner, Tom Roebuck, David Ruderman, and Joanna Weinberg.

everywhere may preach in every tongue the glory of thy Son Jesus." Pompilius swears he will say the prayer every day.[1]

Erasmus's multilayered set piece vividly evokes a central *topos* of Renaissance humanism: the rebirth of Christian life and learning through the study of the original languages of the Sacred Scriptures. To be a humanist was to turn *ad fontes*, to the ancient sources of wisdom. And to be a Christian humanist was to turn to the sources of Christian Antiquity, to the Fathers and, above all, to the Hebrew and Greek source texts of the Bible, and to bring to those sources the critical practices with which humanists had begun reading ancient Greek and Latin texts. Jerome, whose translations from Hebrew and Greek (and revision of older Latin versions) had become the Bible of the Latin West, provided the ideal model and justification for this endeavor: the *vir trilinguis*, a saintly Christian scholar at home in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

The phenomenon scholars have long called "Christian Hebraism" was therefore tightly bound up with Renaissance humanism. Much more than an ideal, Renaissance humanism was an immensely ambitious pedagogical program – the New Learning – that transformed academic curricula across sixteenth-century Europe. By the time Erasmus, the "Prince of Humanists," died in 1536, so-called trilingual colleges had been founded in the Low Countries (Leuven), in Spain (Alcalá de Henares), and in France (the Collège Royale), while colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, as well as universities across the Holy Roman Empire, had appointed lecturers of both Greek and Hebrew as part of one humanist curriculum. By 1532, Rabelais was poking fun at pretentious Hebraists.

Astonishingly, in the very years when Renaissance culture was becoming hungry for Greek and Hebrew learning, two catastrophes – the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the expulsion of Jews from Aragon and Castile in 1492 – brought two waves of exiles, their knowledge, and their books, to Italian shores. The new technology of print triggered an explosive spread of knowledge as well as transformations and inventions of learned practices, all of which had lasting impact on the development of Christian Hebrew studies.

A small number of teachers and institutions played outsized roles in this dissemination of Hebrew learning. Matthias Adriani (d. after 1521), an Iberian *converso*, taught Hebrew at Heidelberg and Tübingen on Reuchlin's recommendation, taught the printer Johannes Amerbach's sons Hebrew in Basel, and on the recommendation of Erasmus became the first Hebrew lecturer at Leuven, before joining Luther in Wittenberg as "professor of sacred letters." In the course of this itinerant European career, Adriani taught some of the most important Hebraists of the sixteenth century,

[1] Desiderius Erasmus, *Colloquies,* trans. and annotated Craig R. Thompson (Toronto, 1997), 244–55.

including Johannes Oecolampadius, Wolfgang Capito, Konrad Pellikan, and Nicolaus Clenardus. Leuven was a particularly vital center for the growth of Hebrew studies. Robert Wakefield, a Yorkshire man from a new Cambridge college – St. John's – founded in 1511 on humanist principles, who succeeded Reuchlin at Tübingen and became the first Hebrew lecturer at Oxford in 1524; Johannes Campensis, who would teach at Leuven from 1521 to 1531 and later at Krakow; Sebastian Nouzenus, in 1527 the first Hebrew professor at the first Lutheran university, Marburg; Nicolaus Clenardus, author of probably the most frequently reprinted Hebrew and Greek grammars in the sixteenth century – all these Hebrew scholars were alumni of the Leuven college that Erasmus helped to found. In the following decades, European universities old and new across the confessional divide would incorporate Hebrew studies into their curricula.

Erasmus's poetic portrait of Jerome and Reuchlin embracing captured the humanist vision for Christian renewal through communion with the Christian past, but it was not the whole truth, nor was it entirely truthful. Firstly, Reuchlin was not the first Christian scholar since Jerome to study Hebrew seriously. Like Erasmus, Reuchlin carefully cultivated his public persona in his writings. Pellikan and his student Sebastian Münster solidified the idea that Reuchlin represented a watershed after centuries of ignorance.[2] Nineteenth-century scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* such as Heinrich Graetz and Ludwig Geiger projected onto Reuchlin an ideal of German–Jewish symbiosis, while Gershom Scholem's attempts to identify Reuchlin's sources consolidated the latter's reputation as the great restorer of forgotten Hebrew learning. Probably on no early modern Christian scholar of Hebrew is the scholarly bibliography larger, and a new generation of scholars is already riding the wave of recent critical editions of Reuchlin's complete works and correspondence. As recently as 2007, it was claimed that "[T]here is no major name in Christian Hebrew studies between Jerome and Johann Reuchlin."[3]

This received wisdom masks a much more complicated (and interesting) story. Pellikan's *De modo legendi et intelligendi hebraeum* [How to Read and Understand Hebrew] was published in 1504, two years before Reuchlin's expansive *Rudimenta*.[4] Earlier, fifteenth-century humanists, including

[2] See the list of "instauratores linguae sacrae" (Jerome, Reuchlin, Pellikan, Münster, and Sanctes Pagnini) in Münster's *Grammatica hebraea Eliae Levitae* (1543), which includes a Latin translation of Elijah Levita's *Sefer ha-Bachur*.

[3] James Barr, "Linguistic Literature, Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd edn., vol. XIII (Jerusalem, 2007), 54.

[4] Johannes Reuchlin, *De rudimentis hebraicis* (1506). The copy in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 73.O.38, belonged to Johannes Brassicanus, Reuchlin's successor as professor of Hebrew at Ingoldstadt, and Erasmus's source for the character in his *Apotheosis*. Erasmus's own copy is now at the Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek Emden, Theol. 2° 0054 H.

Giannozzo Manetti, Petrus Nigri, Paul of Middelburg, Wessel Gansfort, and Rudolf Agricola, had begun acquiring Hebrew in preceding decades, and using it not only for the old reasons of polemic and conversion but also for new translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, new ideas about divine language, and new kinds of historical scholarship, including new attempts to date the Passion.[5] Following pioneering work by Beryl Smalley, Raphael Loewe, and Herman Hailperin, a growing body of research has shed light on numerous examples of medieval Hebrew scholarship practiced by non-Jews.[6] These include, in the twelfth century, Hugh and Andrew of St. Victor and Herbert of Bosham. The thirteenth century saw further impetus to the study of Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic as a corollary of the missionary activity by the newly founded Mendicant orders. The late-medieval biblical commentator, Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349), and Pablo de Santa Maria (*c.* 1352–1435), the rabbi of Burgos Solomon ha-Levi who converted to Christianity and became bishop of Burgos, drew explicitly upon Jewish exegetes, above all Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi), for their biblical commentaries. Lyra's *Postillae* and Pablo of Burgos's additions to them were printed from the 1470s onward, and early modern scholars from Reuchlin, Thomas More, and Agostino Giustiniani to Jean Bodin, Luis de León, and Johannes Drusius read them closely and gratefully, eager to understand the Old Testament's Hebrew text.[7] "Si Lyra non lyrasset, Lutherus non saltasset," ran a common quip ("If Lyra hadn't played his lyre, Luther wouldn't have danced").

Several major works of sixteenth-century Christian Hebrew scholarship were deeply indebted to medieval sources. One of the most widely read was *De arcanis catholicae veritatis* [On the Secrets of Catholic Truth] (printed in 1518, 1550, 1561, 1612, and 1672), written in defense of Reuchlin by the Franciscan Pietro Colonna Galatino.[8] Seeking to demonstrate the truth of Christianity from Jewish sources, Galatino mobilized a wide range of midrashic, targumic, talmudic, and later rabbinic literature. His dense miscellany drew heavily on the *Pugio fidei* [Dagger of Faith] by the Catalan Ramón Martí, composed around 1280 and first printed in 1651

[5] C. Philip E. Nothaft, *Dating the Passion* (Leiden, 2012); Daniel Stein Kokin, 'The Hebrew Question in the Italian Renaissance' (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 2006).

[6] Important explorations of Christian scholars' study of Hebrew and Jewish texts in the medieval Latin West include the work of Gilbert Dahan, Ari Geiger, Debra Goodwin, Yosi Yisraeli, Deeana Klepper, Frans van Liere, Philip Nothaft, Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, Michael Signer, and Eva de Visscher.

[7] See Yosi Yisraeli, "Between Jewish and Christian Scholarship in the Fifteenth Century: the Consolidation of a '*Converso* Doctrine' in the Theological Writings of Pablo de Santa Maria" (Ph.D. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2014).

[8] The copy of the first edition in Trinity College, Cambridge, F.10.60, belonged to Pierfrancesco Giambullari.

after circulating in manuscript, and excerpted in a fourteenth-century work, Porchetus Salvaticus's *Victoria adversus impios hebraeos*.[9] Erasmus must have known that his presentation of Reuchlin as restorer of what had been forgotten since Jerome took no little liberty with the truth.

There is a deeper problem with Erasmus's *Apotheosis*. Reuchlin wrote widely read books on Hebrew grammar and Jewish esoteric lore, and he taught a generation of Hebrew scholars. Reuchlin's fame, however, was also the result of his efforts, ultimately successful, to prevent the total destruction of Hebrew and Jewish books throughout the Holy Roman Empire. A best-selling satire, *Letters of Obscure Men*, made Reuchlin's adversaries the laughing stock of humanist Europe, while Reuchlin's pursuit of Hebrew learning became a synecdoche for the humanist movement. It is in the context of that "Battle of the Books" that Erasmus voiced his support for Reuchlin. But Reuchlin's defense of contemporary Jews, their rights to own and study their books, the rights of Christians to study Hebrew with Jewish teachers (as he did himself and as do the protagonists of his *De arte cabalistica*), his insistence on the importance to Christian learning of esoteric and rabbinic Jewish literature – all this is absent from Erasmus's portrait of him. In the *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus mocks Reuchlin's kabbalistic writings, and in his correspondence he displayed a bitter antipathy toward Jews and Judaism that continues to disturb modern readers. Erasmus knew, then, that Reuchlin was a truly trilingual scholar in a way he himself was not. The Dutchman valued Hebrew scholarship, supporting it personally in Leuven and in Basel, but strangely, unlike Reuchlin, he left it to others. In his annotations to the New Testament, for example, Erasmus gratefully acknowledged the assistance with Hebrew received from Johannes Oecolampadius, a friend of Reuchlin's who helped to produce the Basel printer Johann Froben's Hebrew publications and who would become a prominent reformer. In praising Adriani, Erasmus stressed that he had converted to Christianity long before. In a 1519 letter to Reuchlin's nemesis Hoogstraten, Erasmus assured "if it is Christian to hate Jews, we are all abundantly Christians here."[10] Reuchlin, however, praised one of his Jewish teachers, Jacob Jechiel Loans, as "my most learned teacher and outstanding human being, may God have mercy on him."[11] The contrast could not be greater.

[9] On Galatino as a scholar of Jewish literature and as a reader of the *Pugio fidei* and the *Victoria*, see William Horbury, 'Petrus Galatinus and Jean Thenaud on the Talmud and the *Toledot Yeshu*," in S. Mandelbrote and J. Weinberg, eds., *Jewish Books and their Readers* (Leiden, 2016), 125–50.

[10] P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen, eds., *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi*, vol. IV (Oxford, 1922), 46. See also Hilmar Pabel, "Erasmus and Judaism: A Reexamination in the Light of New Evidence," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 87 (1996), 9–37.

[11] Reuchlin, *De rudimentis hebraicis* (1506), 619 – see also 249.

It was a difference in character, but also in theology. To Erasmus, Judaism was obsolete. To Reuchlin, something of Judaism remained of continuing value to Christianity. Drawing on the ancient Augustinian doctrine of Jewish witness, Reuchlin paraphrased Aquinas' commentary to Romans 9:2, writing in his *Augenspiegel* (1511), "The Jews are our book-bearers, our librarians, who preserve the books from which we may draw the witness to our faith."[12] In the patristic language of Jewish subservience to Christianity, Reuchlin argued that Jewish texts and the living traditions through which they are transmitted remained indispensable to Christian life and learning.

The Reuchlin Affair and subsequent neglect of Hebrew learning in the medieval Latin West have long cast the history of Renaissance Christian Hebrew studies in terms of a conflict between new humanist learning and old scholastic ways. Yet that history is more profoundly marked, and more accurately understood, by this fault-line *within* humanism: between Reuchlin's and Erasmus's respective decisions to trust or not to trust the Jews, their books, their scholars; to reject all Jewish learning since the beginning of Christianity as blind and Judaism itself as irreversibly superseded, or to ascribe a persistent scholarly and even theological legitimacy to Judaism deep into the Christian era.

The tensions between these opposing mentalities deepened as the early modern Christian study of Hebrew and Jewish literature interlocked with the Christian discovery of post-biblical Judaism and (in person or through secondary sources) encounters with contemporary Jews. And those tensions became particularly fraught when that discovery began to inform humanists' historical understanding of the early Church. In 1655, the Cambridge divine John Lightfoot told his readers (and probably his students, too):

> For though it is true indeed that there are no greater enemies to Christ, nor greater deniers of the Doctrine of the Gospel, then [*sic*] the Hebrew Writers; yet as Corah's Censers, and the spoils of David's enemies, were dedicated to the Sanctuary Service, so may the Records, to be met with in these men, be of most excellent use and improvement to the explication of a world of passages in the New testament: Nay multitudes of passages not possible to be explained, but from these Records. For since the scene of the most actings in it, was among the Jews, the speeches of Christ and his Apostles were to the Jews, and they Jews by birth and education that wrote the Gospels and the Epistles, it is no wonder if it speak the Jews Dialect throughout, and glanceth at their Traditions, opinions and Customs

[12] Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers, Hans-Gert Roloff, and Peter Schäfer, eds., *Johannes Reuchlin Sämtliche Werke*, vol. IV, pt. 1 (Stuttgart, 1999), 52.

at every step. What Author in the world but he is best to be understood from the Writers and Dialect of his own Nation?[13]

Lightfoot's argument reveals how such opposing positions not only divided scholars, but also competed *within* one and the same mind: between, on one hand, the Christian, who could not but believe that Christianity (in his particular denomination) fulfilled the Jewish prophecies and that unconverted Jews remained inexorably unsaved if not collectively damned (Lightfoot compares the *Jews* to the vanquished *enemies* of Israel), and, on the other hand, the humanist scholar, who could not but acknowledge the importance of traditions of Jewish erudition to the understanding not only of the Old Testament but also of the world of the Gospels, early Church history, and thereby Christianity itself.

CHRISTIAN KABBALAH

The bookends of Reuchlin's oeuvre, *On the Miracle-Making Word* (1494) and *On the Kabbalistic Art* (1517), grew from his exposure to a multifarious movement of Renaissance scholarship and speculation that has come to be known as Christian Kabbalah. Medieval scholars, including Ramon Llull had explored Jewish mystical traditions, but in the fifteenth century several wider intellectual currents gave Kabbalah a deeper appeal. In Florence, a circle of humanist scholars led by Marsilio Ficino dedicated themselves to the revival of Platonic, Pythagorean, and other traditions of ancient wisdom (*prisca sapientia*). Members of this Florentine academy believed that ancient pagan philosophies ultimately derived from the same divine source as Judaism and Christianity, and contained vestiges of an ancient religion (*prisca theologia*). Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) was the most prominent and precocious member of this circle. Pico discovered Jewish mystical and philosophical works through his encounters with contemporary Jews and through Latin translations, primarily by the Sicilian Jewish convert Flavius Mithridates, also known as Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada. Mithridates was one of several Jewish converts (including Pablo de Heredia and Paolo Ricci) who served as vital intermediaries between Jewish esoteric traditions and their Christian interpreters. Pico boldly incorporated these texts, alongside Platonic, Neoplatonic and Hermetic works, into a syncretistic system of universal wisdom. This interest in Kabbalah brought with it a revaluation of Jewish post-biblical literature more broadly and a new openness toward

[13] John Lightfoot, *The Harmony Chronicle and Order of the New Testament [. . .] illustrated with variety of observations upon the chiefest Difficulties textuall and talmudicall* (1655), sig. a verso.

contemporary Jews. Lorenzo ('the Magnificent') de' Medici (1449–92), patron of the Florentine philosophers, was also the protector of Florence's Jewish community, which included notable non-convert scholars who helped to acquaint Pico and others with Jewish philosophical and mystical traditions, often against the wishes of fellow Jews. Most conspicuous among them were the Ashkenazic-Italian humanist Yohanan Alemanno (*c.* 1435 – after 1504) and the Averroist philosopher Elijah Delmedigo of Crete (*c.* 1460–97).

From Florence, fascination with Jewish esotericism spread to Venice and Rome, where principal Christian kabbalists included Francesco Zorzi (Giorgio), preacher at Venice's Basilica of St. Mark, and Cardinal (in 1517) Egidio da Viterbo, General of the Augustinian Order (1507–18). In the course of the sixteenth century, the study of Kabbalah also became bound up in broader interests in magic and hermeticism, as well as in the practice of natural science and theology, famously in the work of Giordano Bruno (1548–1600). From the Italian peninsula, Christian Kabbalah traveled in various permutations across Europe. Mystically minded scholars who explored kabbalistic texts or drew religious or poetic inspiration from kabbalistic ideas include the itinerant mad genius Guillaume Postel; Jean Thenaud and Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie in France; Johann Albrecht Widmanstadt, Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, and Jakob Böhme in the Holy Roman Empire; John Dee and Henry More in England; Dionisio Vázquez de Toledo, Cipriano de la Huerga, and Luis de León in Spain.

What was Christian Kabbalah? Firstly, it was the study by Christian scholars of Jewish esoteric literature, including the *Sefer ha-Bahir* (translated by Mithridates), the *Sefer Yetzirah* (translated by Postel), the *Sefer ha-Zohar* (printed twice in 1558–60), and works by Joseph Gikatilla, Menaḥem Recanati, and Abraham Abulafia. By and large, Christian kabbalists interpreted these texts as containing hidden evidence for the truth of Christianity, transmitted by Jewish tradition unbeknownst to itself. Secondly, Christian Kabbalah comprised the composition of new texts by Christian scholars, such as Reuchlin's *De arte cabalistica* and Zorzi's *De harmonia mundi* (1525), in which these interpretations were elaborated, as well as biblical commentaries, such as Agostino Giustiniani's glosses to his polyglot Psalter (1516), and dictionaries, notably Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie's *Dictionarium Syro-Chaldaicum* (1572), which incorporated them. Thirdly, many Christian kabbalists understood their work in missionary terms. If Jews could be shown that their most sacred and secret traditions confirmed Christian truth, their conversion might finally be achieved. As confessional conflict fractured European Christendom, some even turned to Kabbalah as a means to universal salvation that could heal the fissures within the Church. Perhaps above all, Christian Kabbalah was the appropriation from Jewish esoteric literature of a set of hermeneutic techniques

by which to interpret a wide range of texts and to manipulate the meaning of primal Hebrew words such as the Tetragrammaton. Through the numerical values and magical qualities of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Pico, Egidio, Reuchlin, and others attempted to demonstrate the truth of Christianity from within Jewish esoteric tradition by means of that tradition's own methods. In the following centuries, Christian Kabbalah became a way to think through the questions that Pico had placed at the center of humanist concerns: human nature, the soul, the creation of the universe, and the nature of human and divine language.

The wide appeal of Christian Kabbalah to theologians, poets, and natural philosophers not versed in Hebrew or Aramaic may be ascribed in part to the Latin translations that made them accessible. Yet a few did master its difficult source languages and ventured deeper into arcane corners of the kabbalistic library. The most accomplished non-Jewish reader of Kabbalah in the seventeenth century was the German nobleman Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636–89), author of *Kabbala denudata* (1677 and 1684), an annotated collection of Latin translations of Jewish esoteric texts. In testimony to his remarkable interests and capabilities, Knorr studied a wealth of kabbalistic thought and teachings developed in Safed in the Upper Galilee by Isaac Luria and by his followers *after* the age of Pico, Reuchlin, and Egidio. Knorr's student, the Netherlandish physician Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (1614–98), served as a key intermediary, disseminating kabbalistic ideas to scholars in England and elsewhere.

During the last half-century, scholars have studied the history of Christian Kabbalah – from pioneering work by Joseph Blau, Frances Yates, William Bouwsma, Gershom Scholem, François Secret, and Chaim Wirszubski to more recent studies and translations by Joseph Dan, Moshe Idel, Allison Coudert, Saverio Campanini, Giulio Busi, Fabrizio Lelli, Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, Crofton Black, and Daniel Stein-Kokin, among others – in dialog with the emergence of the study of Jewish Kabbalah as an academic discipline. While the thesis put forward by Yates, according to which Christian Kabbalah contributed critically to the rise of modern science, remains contested, historical understanding has changed from a focus on what scholars took to be intentional Christian misreadings of Jewish texts to descriptions of a process of creative adoption and adaptation of kabbalistic materials and methods. Scholars of early modern European learning increasingly explore how Christian interpretations and transformations of Jewish esoteric doctrines and ideas were brought to bear, across the West, on ideas about language, philosophy, and natural science, magic, alchemy, and astrology, as well as in Latin and vernacular literary works. As a result, our understanding of the place of Christian Kabbalah in early modern intellectual

history is shifting from that of an obscure, marginal phenomenon to that of a central tradition of European thought.

RETURNING TO THE HEBREW BIBLE

Among the most important motivations spurring Hebrew studies throughout early modern Europe was the desire to consult the source texts of Christian Scripture. Medievals had not forgotten that Jerome had translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew, and we are learning more and more about the extent and practice of the study of the Hebrew Scriptures in the medieval West. But with biblical humanism, this desire took on a new sense of urgency. When, in 1311–12, the Council of Vienne had called for the establishment of chairs in Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic/Syriac, and Arabic at Salamanca, Paris, Bologna, Oxford, and the Papal Court (chairs that long remained empty), it seems to have been primarily for missionary reasons. Three new, additional factors drove the establishment and flourishing of Hebrew and Greek studies across sixteenth-century Europe: the intellectual ideal and pedagogical program of humanism; a desire for Church reform (in motion well before the Protestant Reformation); and the transformative possibilities of print.

A striking example: Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros served as the patron of Spanish humanist studies in the early sixteenth century, of the university of Alcalá de Henares (Roman *Complutum*), and of the so-called Complutensian Polyglot Bible (printed in Alcalá in 1514–17, published after 1520) which contained Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew biblical versions. For its production, Cisernos appointed learned *conversos* who consulted Hebrew incunabula and seven medieval Hebrew manuscripts on which the cardinal had spent a fortune, "converting" Jewish scriptures, in a sense, by removing the Masorah and halakhic divisions of the text to conform it to the Latin Vulgate divisions. In a programmatic preface that captures the spirit and motivations of biblical humanism – patristic precedent, awareness of scribal error and of variants discovered by comparing ancient versions in medieval manuscripts, anxiety about an unstable sacred text, the need for a return to the source texts in the service of establishing a "true" text in print rather than imperfect manuscript – the Cardinal stated:

> Wherever there is a difference between Latin manuscripts or the suspicion of a defective reading (which we see so often because of the incompetence and neglect of copyists) we must refer to the earliest, original version of Scripture, as St. Jerome and Augustine and other ecclesiastical authors caution us to. Thus the right

reading of the books of the Old Testament should be studied from the "Hebrew Truth" and that of the New from Greek manuscripts.

The very idea of a multi-columned Polyglot edition followed the ancient Christian model of Origen's *Hexapla*. Cisneros's preface also shows that the principles of Christian humanism were fully formulated before the Protestant Reformation with which many early modernists continue to associate them. His efforts to establish a trilingual college, to acquire Iberian Hebrew manuscripts in the aftermath of the 1492 expulsion of Jews from Aragon and Castile, and to hire learned *conversos* as editors, demonstrate the persistent importance of Jewish textual traditions in a society in which living Judaism itself had come to an end within recent living memory.[14]

One gets a keen sense of the remarkably wide range of Hebrew and Jewish literature that became available to the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds in the sixteenth century through bibliographies of Hebrew books printed in Venice, Basel, Lyon, Paris, Geneva, and Antwerp, only one of which had a Jewish community at the time.[15] Daniel Bomberg (or van Bomberghen), a merchant from Antwerp, played a critical and pioneering role. He established a printing shop in Venice around 1516 that would produce some 200 of what Emile Schrijver estimates to be *circa* 1,800 Hebrew titles printed in the sixteenth century. The unprecedented space of the printing shop enabled new kinds of social, religious, and intellectual encounters between Jews and Christians, especially in the Mediterranean metropolis of Venice, with its dynamic and diverse Jewish communities from around the Mediterranean and both sides of the Alps. With the help of Jewish scholars and print professionals (editors, typesetters, proofreaders, correctors), Bomberg printed a wide range of exegetical, midrashic, halakhic, and philosophical literature. Bomberg's presses produced several of the most transformative editions of Hebrew and Jewish books ever printed, including the first complete edition of the Babylonian Talmud. The *editio princeps* (1523–4) of the Palestinian Talmud also bore his name. The French Protestant polymath Joseph Scaliger would acquire one of the manuscripts Bomberg's editor used and leave it to the University Library

[14] See José Luis Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero, ed., *V centenario de la Biblia Políglota Complutense* (Madrid, 2014).

[15] See, among others, Abraham Meir Habermann, *The Printer Daniel Bomberg and the List of Books Published by his Press* [Hebrew] (Safed, 1978); Joseph Prijs and Bernhard Prijs, *Die Basler hebräischen Drucke (1492–1866)* (Olten-Freiburg im Breisgau, 1964); Lyse Schwarzfuchs, *Le Livre hébreu à Paris au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 2004); Lyse Schwarzfuchs, *L'Hébreu dans le livre lyonnais au XVIe siècle* (Lyon, 2008); Albert van der Heide, *Hebraica veritas*: Christopher Plantin and the Christian Hebraists (Antwerp, 2008); Lyse Schwarzfuchs, *L'Hébreu dans le livre à Genève au XVIe siècle* (Geneva, 2011).

at Leiden in 1609. It remains the only extant complete manuscript of the *Yerushalmi*.[16] Bomberg's Talmud, along with a later edition (1546–51) printed by another Venetian Christian printer, Giustiniani, transformed Jewish learned culture, consolidating Bomberg's system of pagination and introducing powerful cross-referential apparatuses that remain in use to this day. Beside the Talmuds, Bomberg's most important productions were three editions of the so-called Rabbinic Bible or *Miqra'ot Gedolot*. The first (1517–18) was edited by the Jewish convert Felice da Prato (Felix Pratensis), the second and third (1525 and 1548) by the Sephardic scholar from Tunis Jacob ben Chaim ibn Adoniyah. Unlike the aforementioned Complutensian Polyglot text, Bomberg's Bibles presented the Hebrew scriptures deeply embedded in Jewish textual tradition: ordered according to liturgical and halakhic divisions and set in the middle of the page, surrounded by Masoretic apparatuses, Aramaic *Targumim*, and rabbinic commentaries – especially by Rashi, Abraham ibn Ezra, David Kimchi, Gersonides, and Nachmanides – whose authority these editions helped to solidify. Bomberg's Rabbinic Bibles soon became the most important sources through which early modern Christian scholars discovered directly the textual, exegetical, and liturgical traditions of Jewish biblical culture.

These Jewish commentators and several others, including Bahya ben Asher, Abraham Farissol, Abraham Saba, and Isaac Abravanel, exerted a powerful attraction on Christian scholars eager to grasp the meanings of the Hebrew biblical text, even as they were mindful of the threats posed by granting those exegetes more authority than the Church or than Christian tradition in explaining what the biblical texts meant.[17] After all, Jewish interpretations of a passage could differ from the traditional reading, particularly where the verse in question concerned Christian prophecy or where its quotation in the New Testament, in Greek translation, reflected a different interpretation of the Hebrew. Throughout the early modern period, consequently, Christian recourse to Jewish commentators often prompted suspicions and accusations of Judaizing. Matters could lead beyond scholarship: some were accused of heresy, some were convicted, some even died in prison or at the stake. Most Christian scholars must have agreed, at least nominally, that Jews were blind to the true, Christian meanings of the Old Testament texts. Even Reuchlin, in the margin of

[16] Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, Cod. Or. 4720.

[17] For a careful study of several early modern readers of Saba and Bahya, see Joanna Weinberg, "Crossroads in Hebraism: Johann Buxtorf Gives a Hebrew Lesson to Philippe Duplessis-Mornay," in Mandelbrote and Weinberg, eds., *Jewish Books and their Readers*, 151–68, and the forthcoming article by Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg mentioned there, 162 n. 39.

Isaiah 53 in the exquisite twelfth-century manuscript of the Hebrew Prophets he acquired in Rome in 1498, noted: "bear in mind that this chapter speaks of the Messiah, that is, Christ our king."[18] Nonetheless, many humanists considered several Jewish commentators to be invaluable expositors of the Hebrew source text, even when their commentaries sometimes contained anti-Christian arguments.

Against accusations of Judaizing, Jerome again served as scholarly precedent and theological justification. Jerome himself had studied with Jewish teachers and had coined the critical expression – "Hebraica veritas" – to underscore the fundamental importance and primacy of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. In 1534, Pellikan's student Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), a Franciscan-turned-Reformer, published a bilingual Old Testament, with his own new Latin translation alongside the Hebrew. In a preface, under the heading "that the commentaries of the Jews are not to be condemned," Münster recalled Jerome's Jewish teachers. "I am convinced," Münster added with manifest anachronism, "that if Jerome had had the commentary of Ibn Ezra, or of Nahmanides, or of Gersonides, or of David Kimchi, he would not have needed a living teacher."[19] In the Latin notes to this Bible (revised and reprinted in 1546), Münster included Latin translations and paraphrases of numerous rabbinic observations on and interpretations of the Hebrew biblical text. Following in Jerome's footsteps, then, could mean radically different things to different humanists. To Münster, in complete contrast to Erasmus, it meant reading, translating, and trusting the rabbis.

If Medici Florence was the wellspring for Christian Kabbalah, Rome and Venice saw wider streams of Christian exploration of Hebrew and Jewish texts. Bomberg's presses provided Münster with much of his library of Hebraica and Judaica, large parts of which he translated into Latin. Between 1516 and 1518, Leo X (Lorenzo de' Medici's son Giovanni) received the dedicatory epistles of, among others, the Complutensian Polyglot, Bomberg's first Rabbinic Bible, Galatino's *De arcanis*, Reuchlin's *De arte*

[18] "Consydera hoc capitulum dici de Mesiah id est Christo rege nostro." The manuscript is now in Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, Cod. Reuchlin 3. See there, fol. 226 recto, reproduced in Matthias Dall'Asta and Gerald Dörner, eds., *Johannes Reuchlin's Bibliothek Gestern und Heute* (Heidelberg, 2007).

[19] "Nec dubito, si Hieronymo fuisset vel Aben Ezrae, aut Mosi Gerundensis, aut Ben Gersom, aut Dauid Kimhi commentarius, uiuo praeceptore opus non habuisset": *En tibi Lector Hebraica Biblia Latina Planeque Nova Sebast[iani] Munsteri tralatione* . . . (1534), sig. ß 2 recto. The copy in the British Library, Or.72.c.3, belonged to Philipp Melanchthon. The copy of the 1546 edition in the Universitätsbibliothek Basel, FA I 4, belonged to Johannes Buxtorf, who added verse numbers by hand throughout the volume's 1,600 pages to make it an effective reference work.

cabalistica, and the Polyglot Psalter edited by Agostino Giustiniani.[20] In Venice, Bomberg acquired papal approbation for the printing of the Talmud, while in Rome, the polymath Jewish biblical scholar, grammarian, poet, and lexicographer Elijah Levita (*c.* 1468–1549), lived for twelve years (1517–27) in the palace of Egidio da Viterbo. Rabbinic responsa were printed on the Campo de' Fiori, while, across the Tiber, the Vatican Library appointed a *scriptor hebraicus*, a Hebraist scholar-librarian responsible for its growing collections.

The foundation of the Roman Inquisition (1542) and the emergence of a systematic regime of censorship brought an end to this openness to Hebrew and post-biblical Jewish learning. In 1553, on the first day of the Jewish New Year, confiscated copies of the Talmud and related Jewish books were burned on Rome's Campo de' Fiori. The inquisitor Giovanni Paolo Caraffa was elected Paul IV. The Papal States imposed several far-reaching restrictions upon Jewish life, including both the construction of walled ghettos and the confiscation and destruction of Jewish books. Venetian Hebrew presses ground to a halt for a decade, and Parisian printers happily stepped in to answer the untiring demand.

In 1546, the Council of Trent decreed the Latin Vulgate, the version ascribed to Jerome, to be the Church's only authentic version of Scripture. The decree was designed to counter new Latin translations such as those by Erasmus, Pagnini, Cajetan, Lefèvre d'Étaples and Münster, but theologians absent from the council soon took it as an ascription of authority to the Vulgate vis-à-vis the Hebrew and Greek. Hebrew scholarship consequently came under new kinds of pressure. In 1564, the Council rolled back the Church's harsh position on Jewish books, permitting the publication and ownership of Hebrew and Jewish books on the condition of the "expurgation" of passages deemed offensive to Christianity. Whereas historians long viewed censorship in starkly negative, exclusionist terms, more recently scholars have shown how the practice of censorship itself, both by Jewish converts such as Domenico Hierosolymitano and Camillo Jaghel and by non-convert Catholic scholars such as Marco Marini and Roberto Bellarmino, demanded immense erudition in Jewish literature. As Piet van Boxel has argued, Catholic censorship of Hebrew and Jewish books saved the thousands of surviving volumes that still bear these censors' names from destruction.[21]

[20] Printed in Genoa in 1516, Giustiniani's Psalter contained the Psalms in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, and a Latin commentary drawing from a wide range of Jewish exegetical authorities. Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, 1368 C 2, belonged to Joseph Scaliger; Bryn Mawr College Library, BS 1419 fA2 1516, belonged to his student Daniel Heinsius.

[21] Piet van Boxel, "Robert Bellarmine, Christian Hebraist and Censor," in Christopher Ligota and Jean-Louis Quantin, eds., *History of Scholarship* (Oxford, 2006), 251–75. See

Early modern Hebraic studies were often bound up in the study of other ancient textual traditions, both Jewish (such as Aramaic, Greek, Judeo-Arabic) and Christian (especially Syriac, Greek, and Ethiopic), and early modern scholars practiced such comparative scholarship in different critical, exegetical, and homiletic genres. Many major sixteenth- and seventeenth-century biblical commentaries, such as those collected in the nine-volume *Critici sacri* (1660, 1698), focused on close readings of Hebrew texts and of Jewish exegetical authorities. Lancelot Andrewes, John Donne, and other learned churchmen incorporated reflection on the Hebrew text into their sermons. Much of the work of Johannes Drusius (1550–1616), a Flemish scholar who studied and taught Hebrew at Cambridge, Oxford, Leiden, and Franeker and was widely read by Catholics and Protestants alike, consisted of fine-grain, comparative readings and elucidations of the Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and Syriac versions. Massive, multi-volume Polyglot Bibles were printed across the early modern period, of which the aforementioned Complutensian (1514–17), the Antwerp Polyglot Bible edited by Benito Arias Montano (1568–73), the Paris Polyglot Bible supervised by Guy-Michel Le Jay (1628–45), and the London Polyglot edited by Brian Walton (1653–8) are the most accomplished. Each expanded upon its precedent with ever more versions, until the London Polyglot included Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Samaritan Hebrew, Ethiopic, and Persian. Both the results of comparative study and the catalyst of further critical analysis, these monuments of erudition and the art of printing epitomize the integration of Hebrew into the wider early modern study of ancient Jewish and Christian textual traditions of East and West.

Reformers sought to bring the biblical text to the masses through vernacular translation and preaching, scholars Catholic and Reformed were drawn to the source texts, and print made Bibles affordable. Together, these developments formed powerful incentives to produce new biblical translations. These included translations of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin, such as those by the Catholic Sanctes Pagnini, revised by Michael Servetus and by Benito Arias Montano, and by the Reformed Münster and by the Italian Jewish convert to Calvinism (via Catholicism) Immanuel Tremellius. Vernacular translations also turned to the Hebrew, including Luther's German Bible (1534), the English translations of William Tyndale (1526–36), the Geneva Bible (1560), and the King James Bible (1611), as well as the Dutch Statenvertaling (1637). These Latin and vernacular translations of the Old Testament were the result of deep engagement not only with the Hebrew

now Piet van Boxel, *Jewish Books in Christian Hands: Theology, Exegesis and Conversion under Gregory XIII (1572–1585)* (Vatican City, 2016), which appeared after the completion of this chapter.

text but also with Jewish exegetical traditions. Surviving personal copies, such as Luther's annotated copy of the Hebrew Bible printed by Gershom Soncino at Brescia in 1494 or the Bomberg Rabbinic Bibles that belonged to King James translators Lawrence Chaderton and Richard Kilbye, testify to their use.[22] In this way, the history of early modern Christian Hebrew scholarship includes masterpieces of vernacular literature in several European languages that were translations from the Hebrew and the product of profound Christian engagement with Jewish exegetical traditions.[23]

Questions of biblical criticism (so-called *Critica sacra*) sent terrific tremors through the vast network of early modern scholars – the Republic of Letters – who corresponded across confessional boundaries. Among the most contested issues was the identification of the oldest, most reliable version of the Old Testament. Was it the Hebrew because it was the *Urtext*? Was it the Septuagint, a Greek translation of a lost Hebrew original over 1,000 years older than the oldest known extant Hebrew manuscripts and quoted extensively within the New Testament? Or was it the Samaritan Pentateuch, reflecting a tradition perhaps preceding Hebrew's ancient shift to square script and the introduction of vowel points? The answer to such questions could have far-reaching consequences. Given diverging chronologies between the Hebrew and the Greek Pentateuch, for example, knowledge of the date of creation and the age of the world itself was at stake. This urgency of ascertaining the authenticity of the Hebrew text brought both the question of the antiquity of the vowel points and Jewish traditions of textual transmission – the Masorah – to the heart of some of the most contested issues in early modern intellectual history.[24]

Here, too, Bomberg's Rabbinic Bibles set the parameters of the debate for nearly two centuries. Jacob ben Haim, on a chain of authority leading back through Isaac Abravanel and Solomon ben Adret to the Talmud, presented the entire Hebrew Bible – variants, vowel points, and all – as Sinaitic revelation. In between the first and second of Jacob ben Haim's editions, Elijah Levita published his *Masoret ha-Masoret* (1538). Levita had

[22] Luther's Hebrew Bible is now Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, 4° Inc. 2840. Chaderton's copy of the Rabbinic Bible is now Cambridge University Library, S.816.bb.60.5–6; Kilbye's copy is now Lincoln College, Oxford, L.10.3–6. I am grateful to Nicholas de Lange for bringing Chaderton's *Miqra'ot Gedolot* to my attention, and to Joanna Weinberg for alerting me to Kilbye's.

[23] See E. I. J. Rosenthal, "Rashi and the English Bible" [1940], in Rosenthal, *Studia semitica I* (Cambridge, 1971), 56–85.

[24] See Noel Malcom, "Hobbes, Ezra, and the Bible," in Malcom, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, 2002), 383–431, and Scott Mandelbrote, "Isaac Vossius and the Septuagint," in Erik Jorink and Dirk van Miert, eds., *Isaac Vossius (1618–1689) between Science and Scholarship* (Leiden, 2012), 85–117.

worked for Bomberg during Ben Haim's tenure, and his book offered a *vademecum* to the Masoretic apparatus as printed in Bomberg's Rabbinic Bibles. But Levita also made a historical argument, maintaining that the vowel points were a very late addition to the consonantal biblical text. It is hard to overestimate the impact on early modern Christian scholarship of Levita's work, especially with Münster's partial Latin translation of it in 1539. Arguably more than any other text, it opened up the textual tradition of the Hebrew Bible to the humanist learned world at the very moment when issues of transmission and textual history had come to frame the way humanists thought about the Latin and Greek texts they studied. For the next two centuries, the diametrically opposed positions of Jacob ben Haim and Elijah Levita would inform some of the most fraught debates in early modern European learned culture.

The question of the trustworthiness of the Hebrew text persisted throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with ever more sophisticated arguments, and entangled in abstruse confessional polemics. In the 1570s, Benito Arias Montano presented the Masorah as predating the Christian era, and thereby as an intrinsic part of the Jewish legacy to Christianity. The debates surrounding the Antwerp Polyglot Bible, whose publication Montano supervised *in situ*, triggered renewed efforts to correct the Latin Vulgate. When they floundered, Protestant scholars laced their biblical commentaries and treatises with mockery of the Vulgate's many imperfections. Catholic scholars, for their part, pointed to the Masoretic variants and the questionable antiquity of the vowel points to argue that Protestants did not have a stable source text either. Without the authority of the Church to determine which version of Scripture was authentic, counter-reformers claimed, the central Protestant notion of *Sola Scriptura* was meaningless. Johannes Buxtorf's *Tiberias* (1620) epitomized the Protestant defense of the antiquity of the vowel points and of the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible. Appearing alongside Buxtorf's own new edition of the Rabbinic Bible (1618–20), his *Tiberias* presented real talmudic evidence to demonstrate that certain readings predated the Tiberian Masorites. Historically minded Protestant scholars including Joseph Scaliger and Isaac Casaubon, however, recognized the instability of the Hebrew text. Master critics themselves, they came to understand the Masorah as a Jewish tradition of what humanists called the *ars critica*.[25] In his *Arcanum punctationis revelatum* (first published anonymously by Thomas Erpenius in Leiden in 1624), the French Protestant Louis Cappel charted a middle way, granting that the vowel points were a

[25] See Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg, *"I Have Always Loved the Holy Tongue": Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 307–28.

late addition that nonetheless reflected an old oral tradition.[26] Whatever position they took, leading seventeenth-century biblical critics from Cappel and Isaac Vossius to Jean Morin and Richard Simon had to admit that even sacred texts had all-too-human histories of imperfect transmission. Among the lasting results of their labors is the fact that the Jewish traditions, customs, and laws that had governed the transmission of the Hebrew Bible since antiquity became an inexorable part of how Christian scholarship has understood its own biblical traditions, and have remained so ever since.

TOOLS AND TRANSLATIONS

The widespread acquisition of Hebrew and Aramaic by early modern scholars was made possible in large part by the production and proliferation of the instruments necessary for such acquisition: grammars, dictionaries, bibliographies, and editions, in the source languages, in translation, and in multilingual editions.

A wave of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hebrew grammars followed Pellikan's 1504 primer. Abraham de Balmes and Elijah Levita, Jewish scholars steeped in medieval Jewish traditions and working with Christian printers, composed original and influential grammars. Jewish converts, too, such as Alfonso de Zamora at Alcalá and Salamanca, Johannes Isaac Levita at Leuven and Cologne, and Tremellius in Strasbourg, Cambridge, and Heidelberg all produced grammars of their own. Most early modern Hebrew grammars, however, were composed by non-convert Christian scholars, including best-sellers by Clenardus, Münster, Pagnini, and Antoine Chevalier in the sixteenth century, and by Johannes Buxtorf (father and son) in the seventeenth. By the second half of the sixteenth century, many Christian teachers of Hebrew had composed Hebrew grammars of their own. Raphael Loewe was surely right to note that the "high frequency with which from 1504 onward Hebrew grammars were published (and reprinted) must imply a student market greatly outnumbering the names of those Christian Hebraists known to us as such from their publications."[27] One recent census, listing some 461 Hebrew grammars printed in the sixteenth century, resoundingly confirms Loewe's estimation.[28] By

[26] R. A. Muller, "The Debate over the Vowel Points and the Crisis in Orthodox Hermeneutics," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 10 (1980), 53–72.

[27] Raphael Loewe, "Christian Hebraists," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd edn., vol. VIII (Jerusalem, 2007), 515.

[28] Santiago García-Jalón de la Lama and Manuel Veiga Díaz, "Repertorio de gramáticas hebreas impresas en Europa en el siglo XVI," *Helmantica* 51, 156 (2000), 535–742, which counts different editions of the same grammars separately.

the turn of the seventeenth century, vernacular Hebrew grammars and lexicons started to appear alongside those in Latin.[29]

Pedagogically and conceptually, humanist study of language followed the *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric), and humanists often sought to describe Hebrew in terms of the Latin and Greek language arts and their traditional categories. Some, however, began to think outside the Greco-Latin paradigm, historically and linguistically. Humanists in the tradition of Valla thought about texts and language in new, historical terms, complicating the biblical narrative of the Tower of Babel that lent theological justification to the primacy of Hebrew and Christian kabbalists' belief in the mystical exceptionality of the language in which God created the world.[30] David Kimchi's *Mikhlol* drew attention to a sophisticated medieval Jewish grammatical tradition. While the term "Semitic," drawn from Sacred History, would emerge as a linguistic category only in the late eighteenth century (ironically at the very moment when Sacred History ceased to provide a historically and linguistically plausible account of the multiplicity of languages), some humanists started thinking about Hebrew in terms not of cases, declination, and conjugation, but of triliteral roots and verbal paradigms, discovering deep similarities between Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic. Most early modern students of Hebrew did not venture deeply into other Oriental languages, but no European scholar of the early modern period studied Syriac or Arabic before first acquiring Hebrew. The pioneers of Arabic learning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – Guillaume Postel, Joseph Scaliger, Franciscus Raphelengius, Thomas Erpenius, William Bedwell, Edmund Castell, Edward Pococke, Johannes Heinrich Hottinger – were, without exception, highly accomplished Hebraists, in ways that made Judeo-Arabic texts vital sources for the study of both Jewish and Islamic worlds.[31]

As with grammars, so several Jewish scholars exposed to wider Renaissance culture also composed dictionaries of Hebrew and Aramaic that gained large, grateful non-Jewish readerships, above all Elijah Levita's *Tishbi* (1541, 1557, and 1601) and *Meturgeman* (1541). Here, too, Kimchi provided the model. The most important Hebrew–Latin dictionaries of the early modern period, notably Sanctes Pagnini's *Thesaurus linguae sanctae*, took Kimchi's *Sefer Shorashim* [Book of Roots], the lexicographical part of his *Mikhlol*, as their model and source. Between 1529 and 1616, Pagnini's work went through

[29] John Udall, *The Key of the Holy Tongue* (1593).

[30] See Brian Copenhaver and Daniel Stein Kokin, "Egidio da Viterbo's *Book on Hebrew Letters*: Christian Kabbalah in Papal Rome," *Renaissance Quarterly* 67 (2014), 1–42.

[31] See Jan Loop, *Johann Heinrich Hottinger: Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 2013), 64.

numerous editions, revisions, and abridgments in Paris, Geneva, Antwerp, and Leiden. Scholars including Münster, Raphelengius, and Scaliger also studied the great twelfth-century lexicon of Nathan ben Yechiel, the *Sefer Aruch*, which explained Greek, Arabic, and other loanwords in rabbinic literature, revealing the impact on ancient and medieval Judaism of the various Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures in which Jews had lived.[32]

Humanists' exploration of these and other medieval Jewish lexicographers drew their attention to the historical strata (biblical, Mishnaic, rabbinic) of the Hebrew language. To some, however, those strata interlocked with sacred history in ways that rendered post-biblical Hebrew suspect. The Wittenberg Hebraist Johannes Forster (1496–1558), Reuchlin's student and Luther's sidekick in translating the Hebrew Bible into German, produced a very different Hebrew dictionary. Forster's *New Hebrew Dictionary, established not from the commentaries of the rabbis nor through the idiotic imitation of our homegrown doctors, but rather from the treasures of Holy Scriptures themselves, and uncovered by the accurate collation of passages of the same, carefully annotated with phrases from the Old and New Testament* programmatically disregards post-Biblical Jewish literature altogether, even as it draws attention to it.[33]

Gates leading deeper into the library of Jewish literature were unlocked with the compilation and publication of keys to Hebrew and Aramaic abbreviations and acronyms, whose use is one of the distinctive characteristics of rabbinic literature. Matthäus Aurogallus (Goldhahn, *c.* 1490–1543), Adriani's successor at Wittenberg, included a list of them in his *Compendium hebreae grammatices* (1523). Expanded lists appeared in Münster's *Chaldaica grammatica* (1527) and Jean Mercier's *Tabulae in grammaticen linguae chaldaicae* (1560). Buxtorf's *De abbreviaturis hebraicis liber novus et copiosus* (1613) contained a much longer list of keys to abbreviations, expanded even further by his son (1640). Scholarly instruments such as these powerfully aided dedicated Christian scholars to consult Hebrew and Jewish texts in the original.

Among the conceptual limitations of "Christian Hebraism" is the way it has kept a much larger group of learned Christians who explored Hebrew

[32] Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, 874 B 4, 873 B 15, 839 A 6, 874 C 19, and 838 A 15 are Joseph Scaliger's copies of Kimchi's *Sefer Shorashim* (1491), Pagnini's *Thesaurus linguae sanctae* (1548), Levita's *Meturgeman* (1541), Levita's *Tishbi* (1557), and Nathan ben Yechiel's *Arukh* (1531), respectively.

[33] Johannes Forsterus, *Dictionarium Hebraicum novum non ex rabinorum commentis, nec nostratium doctorum stulta imitatione descriptum, sed ex ipsis thesauris sacrorum bibliorum, et eorundem accurata locorum collatione depromptum, cum phrasibus scripturae veteris et Noui Testamenti diligenter annotatis* (1557, 1564). The Leiden copy, 873 A 3, belonged to Joseph Scaliger.

and Jewish texts in translation largely out of sight of much modern scholarship.[34] In the course of the early modern period, an expansive library of Jewish literature was translated into Latin, the *lingua franca* of European learning, enabling scholars not known as expert Hebraists, and indeed others outside the universities, to consult and study Jewish literature in informed and meaningful ways.

In addition to new translations of the Hebrew Bible, Latin translations were also made of the Targums. Onkelos was translated twice, in the Complutensian Polyglot (1517, reprinted separately in 1535) and again by Paul Fagius in Strasbourg (1546). In the 1550s and 1560s, Tremellius, Mercier, Jean Cinquarbres, Gilbert Génébrard, and others translated Targums to other books of the Hebrew Bible from Aramaic into Latin. Scholars including Münster and Génébrard in the sixteenth century, and Wilhelmus Coddaeus, Francis Taylor (or Tayler), and Johannes Leusden in the seventeenth, produced Latin translations of Hebrew biblical commentaries by Rashi, Abraham ibn Ezra, and David Kimchi. Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* was translated at least twice, by Agostino Giustiniani and Jacob Mantino (1520) and by the younger Johannes Buxtorf (1629). Judah Halevi's apologetic defense of Judaism, *Kuzari*, was also translated twice (from Judah ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation of the Arabic), once for Archbishop William Laud by Francis Taylor, who also translated the *Targum Yerushalmi*,[35] and once by the younger Johannes Buxtorf (1660). Benito Arias Montano translated the travels of Benjamin of Tudela into Latin (1575), as did Constantijn L'Empereur (1633).[36] Jewish chronicles, chronologies, and forgeries spoke to humanists' historical imagination, and some found Latin translators, too. Among them, Münster translated *Sefer Yossipon* (1541), which Joseph Scaliger demonstrated to be a medieval work, rather than the ancient Hebrew Josephus. Génébrard translated *Seder Olam Zuta* and *Seder Olam Raba* and parts of Abraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* (1572). Willem Vorstius translated *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* and David Ganz's *Zemach David* (1644), and Georg Gentius translated Solomon ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah* (1651). Scaliger, Casaubon, Buxtorf, and other scholars who could, studied these and other historical sources like Abraham Zacuto's *Sefer Yuchasin* and Joseph Albo's *Sefer Iqqarim* in

[34] On Calvin's use of the translations by his teacher, Sebastian Münster, see Max Engamarre, "*Joannes Calvinus Trium Linguarum Peritus?* La Question de l'hébreu," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 58 (1996), 35–60.

[35] Taylor's unpublished translation of Halevi is Lambeth Palace Library, MS 478.

[36] See Zur Shalev, "Benjamin of Tudela, Spanish Explorer," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 25, 1 (2010), 17–33.

the original.[37] Medieval Jewish polemical and anti-Christian works, including the *Sefer Nizzahon* and the *Toledot Yeshu*, found Christian readers like Johann Christoph Wagenseil, who studied, translated, and anthologized them with a blend of hostility and fascination (see Wagenseil's *Tela ignea satanae*, 1681).[38]

Few books met with more extreme positive and negative reception in early modern Europe than the Talmud. The polemic and prejudice that had underpinned the Talmud's medieval condemnations and burnings persisted and played into the confiscations and burnings of the 1550s. Yet by the mid sixteenth century, a growing number of Christian scholars began to consult the Talmud not to condemn Judaism but to explore the origins of Christianity and the character of the language of the New Testament, identifying the Mishnah in particular as a reflection of the world described in the Gospels.[39]

Addressing the Council of Trent in 1563, for example, Benito Arias Montano drew on a disagreement between Hillel and Shammai regarding the grounds for divorce (Mishnah Gittin 9:10) to explain the legal context of the question the Pharisees put to Jesus in Matthew 19.[40] At that time, Montano notes, a delegation of Italian Jews had come to Trent to plead for the moderation of the index of forbidden books. Shortly thereafter, in 1564, the Council issued a new index that permitted printing the Talmud again, but now on the conditions of censorship and the removal of the name Talmud. It is not unthinkable that Montano's intervention played some part in this shift in policy – a letter survives in which he requests permission from the powerful Cardinal Sirleto to perform the expurgation himself.[41] By the end of 1581, in an astonishing collaboration between Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and German and Italian Jews, a new Babylonian Talmud appeared from the Basel press of Ambrosius Froben, in the house

[37] See Scaliger's densely annotated copy of Ganz's work, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, 875 E 31. The copies of Zacuto's *Sefer Yuchasin* in the Bodleian Library, O.1.5. Art. Seld. and D.4.20 Linc., belonged to John Selden and Edward Bernard, respectively. On early modern Christian readers of Albo, see Sina Rauschenbach, *Joseph Albo* (Leiden, 2002).

[38] Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson, and Yaacov Deutsch, eds., *Toledot Yeshu ("The Life Story of Jesus") Revisited* (Tübingen, 2011).

[39] See Joanna Weinberg, "A Hebraic Approach to the New Testament," in Ligota and Quantin, eds., *History of Scholarship*, 238–47; Carsten Wilke, "Splendeurs et infortunes du talmudisme académique en Allemagne," in D. Tollet, ed., *Les Textes judéophobes et judéophiles dans l'Europe chrétienne à l'époque moderne, XVIème–XVIIIème siècles* (Paris, 2000), 97–134; Anthony Grafton, "'Pandects of the Jews': A French, Swiss and Italian Prelude to John Selden," in Mandelbrote and Weinberg, eds., *Jewish Books and their Readers*, 169–88.

[40] Benito Arias Montano, *Elucidationes in quatuor Evangelia* (1575), 63.

[41] Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. Lat. 2023, fol. 25 recto.

in which Erasmus had died. Censored of offensive mention of Jesus and Christianity (and without the entire tractate *Avodah Zarah*), the Basel Talmud nonetheless answered widespread Jewish and Christian demand, testifying to the persistence of both Erasmus's mistrust of Jewish writings and Reuchlin's belief in their vital importance to Christian learning.

By the end of the sixteenth century, humanists were reading the Talmud to reconstruct everything from the service and dimensions of the Jerusalem Temple and the priestly vestments to the Sanhedrin and the laws of marriage, agriculture, and idolatry. Arias Montano consulted it to compile lists of weights and measures for the antiquarian apparatus of the Antwerp Polyglot. Andreas Masius searched it for a Jewish account of the translation of the Septuagint and provided the readers of his polyglot edition of Joshua (1574) with a detailed, non-polemical description of its contents. The second printed catalogue of a University Library – that of Leiden – described the Babylonian Talmud in more detail than any other book.[42] Lancelot Andrewes drew up a precise and detailed index on the flyleaves of his copy of the Bomberg *Yerushalmi*, cross-referencing his entries in the margins.[43] Joseph Scaliger, as Anthony Grafton has shown, mined it for a set of brilliant inquiries into ancient history and chronology.[44] Nevertheless, even a man of Scaliger's incomparably polymathic and polyglot erudition still needed a Jewish (convert) teacher, Philip Ferdinand, to study the Talmud in depth. The decades following Scaliger's death in 1609 saw the production of instruments necessary for more advanced studies of rabbinic literature. Jewish and Protestant scholars in England, Holland, and Germany, including Isaac Abendana, Francis Taylor, Johannes Coccejus, Constantijn L'Empereur, Willem Vorstius, Georg Gentius, Robert Sheringham, Sebastian Schmidt, Johann Benedikt Carpzov II, and Willem Surenhusius worked throughout the seventeenth century on Latin translations of the Mishna, parts of the Talmud, and of Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*.[45] Edward Pococke translated part of Maimonides's *Commentary on the*

[42] Petrus Bertius, *Nomenclator: The First Printed Catalogue of Leiden University Library (1595), Facsimile Edition by R. Breugelmans and Jan Just Witkam* (Leiden, 1995). The description is quite certainly by the printer, the professor of Hebrew Franciscus Raphelengius.

[43] Pembroke College Library, Cambridge, 2.2.4.

[44] Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship* (1993); Grafton, "Christian Hebraism and the Rediscovery of Hellenistic Judaism," in Richard I. Cohen, Natalie B. Dohrmann, Adam Shear, and Elchanan Reiner, eds., *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of David B. Ruderman* (Cincinnati, 2014), 169–80.

[45] See, for example, A. Kuyt and E. Schrijver, "Translating the Mishnah in the Northern Netherlands: A Tentative *Bibliographie Raisonnée*," in A. Kuyt and N. A. van Uchelen, eds., *History and Form: Dutch Studies in the Mishnah* (Amsterdam, 1988), 1–42; Aaron Katchen, *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis* (Cambridge, MA, 1984).

Mishna from the Judeo-Arabic in his *Porta Mosis* (1655); Johannes Leusden's *Philologus hebraeus* (1656) included, as an appendix, his Hebrew edition and Latin translation the *Sefer ha-Mizvoth*, a list of the 613 commandments in Jewish law. Meanwhile, Buxtorf – father and son – produced the *Lexicon chaldaicum talmudicum rabbinicum* (1639), the most powerful early modern lexicographical tool for exploring rabbinic literature.

The ability to consult Hebrew and Jewish sources became important to early modern natural philosophers, too. Several prominent geographers, astronomers, and mathematicians were accomplished Hebraists, including Münster, his student Oswald Schreckenfuchs, Jakob Christmann, Rudolf Snellius, and Jacob Golius. Such scholars discovered that Hebrew also served as a gateway to the Greco-Arabic scientific tradition. Christian scholars collected, studied, and translated Hebrew translations of Arabic scientific and medical works by Avicenna and others, as well as of Arabic translations of Greek medical texts. When the Giunti press published the collected works of Aristotle in 1550–2, that monumental edition included the commentaries of Averroes, translated from the Arabic, via Hebrew, into Latin by Provençal and Italian Jews.

As they explored different genres and periods of Hebrew and Jewish literature, humanists often read them in familiar, comparative terms. Drusius presented the collection of ancient Jewish wisdom sayings that he translated into Latin as "apophthegmata," after Erasmus's translation of ancient Greek sayings.[46] Buxtorf presented his expansive study of Hebrew letters as a Hebrew counterpart to Erasmus's letter-writing manual, *De conscribendis epistolis*, comparing rabbinic responsa to the epistolary culture of the Republic of Letters in which he himself played a prominent role. In so doing, Drusius, Buxtorf, and others incorporated Jewish texts and traditions into the learned and literary forms and genres of humanist Latinity.[47]

Humanists also brought to their Jewish scholarship the elaborate and sophisticated techniques designed for the collection, organization, memorization, and efficient retrieval of the immense amount of information

[46] Johannes Drusius, *Apophthegmata ebraeorum ac arabum* . . . (1599, 1612). The copy in the Bodleian Library, 4° D 9 Th. Seld, belonged to John Selden.

[47] Johannes Buxtorf, *Institutio epistolaris hebraica* (1610, 1629). The copy in the British Library, 1085.k.12, belonged to Isaac Casaubon: Theodor Dunkelgrün, "The Humanist Discovery of Hebrew Epistolography," in Mandelbrote and Weinberg, eds., *Jewish Books and their Readers*, 211–59. For the comparable Christian study of a different Hebrew genre, see Michal Andreatta, "Collecting Hebrew Epitaphs in the Early Modern Age: The Christian Hebraist as Antiquarian," in Mandelbrote and Weinberg, eds., *Jewish Books and their Readers*, 260–86.

brought forth by print.[48] Lifelong systematic note-taking, in commonplace books and other notebooks, served Casaubon and Buxtorf as an intermediate stage between reading and original composition, as Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg have shown.[49] From Zurich polymath Conrad Gesner's *Bibliotheca universalis* (1545–9) onward, Hebrew and Jewish books were also integrated into universal systems of knowledge and the massive encyclopedias that humanists compiled. Among humanists' new techniques for 'dealing with information overload' was the compilation of bibliographies. Decades before the first printed bibliography composed by a Jew (Sabbatai Bass's *Sefer Siftei Yeshenim* of 1680), Hebrew and Jewish bibliography emerged both as a corollary of censorship in Sixtus of Sienna's *Bibliotheca sancta* (1575) and as a genre of humanist scholarship in its own right. The major examples of the latter are Buxtorf's *Bibliotheca rabbinica* (1613, reprinted and expanded in 1640, 1696, and 1708); Jean Plantavit de la Pause, *Bibliotheca rabbinica* (1645); Giulio Bartolocci's *Bibliotheca magna rabbinica* (1675–84); and Carlo Giuseppe Imbonati's *Bibliotheca latino-hebraica* (1694). Johann Christoph Wolf's massive *Bibliotheca hebraea* (1715–33), which ran to over 5,000 pages, and the thirty-four folio volumes of Biagio Ugolini's *Thesaurus antiquitatum sacrarum* (1744–69) collected and looked back panoramically on two and a half centuries of Christian study of Judaism in all its historical variety.[50]

POLITICAL HEBRAISM

Early modern Christian scholars also turned to ancient, medieval and contemporary Jewish texts with political questions, seeking precedents and justifications for a contemporary regime and in particular for the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular powers. Such questions captivated scholars across a Europe torn apart by wars of religion and by shifting political and confessional loyalties. Reading Josephus, the Talmud, and Maimonides alongside textual and material sources from Greek, Roman, and other ancient civilizations, humanist scholars welded together antiquarian investigation, legal history, and political thought into a sophisticated genre of erudition. A set of early modern treatises devoted to the "Jewish Commonwealth," or *Respublica hebraica*, each seeking to reconstruct the ancient Hebrew constitution and identify its contemporary pertinence,

[48] On these techniques in general, see Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven, 2010).

[49] Grafton and Weinberg, *"I Have Always Loved the Holy Tongue."*

[50] On Wolf, Ugolini, and Hebrew studies in the age of encyclopaedism, see Andreatta, "Collecting Hebrew Epitaphs."

fills a bookshelf. Through the cumulative study of these treatises, "political Hebraism" has come to be seen as a particular aspect of both early modern Judaic studies and humanist political thought.[51]

The French Calvinist Bonaventure Corneille Bertram (1531–94) seems to have been the first to devote a treatise exclusively to the study of ancient Israel as a model for a contemporary politics. A versatile Hebrew scholar who had studied with Mercier and Canini in Paris before fleeing to Switzerland, Bertram's works include Hebrew and Aramaic grammar and lexicography, biblical commentary and translation, and studies of contemporary Jewish life and ritual. Bertram's *De politia judaica* (1574, 1580, 1631, 1660, 1697) looked toward the ancient Jewish state to buttress the legitimacy of resistance to a tyrannical monarch, of the kind that had already marked the French Protestant experience and would long mark Huguenot life. South of the Alps, the philologist and historian of Roman law Carlo Sigonio (*c.* 1520–84) composed *De republica hebraeorum* (1582), which reflected the deep tension within Bolognese life between loyalty to Rome and republican-minded autonomy. Building on Bertram and the French historian and legal theorist Jean Bodin, and studying Jewish sources in Latin translation, Sigonio identified the Hebrew Republic as an Aristotelian aristocracy based on a God-given Law, with the power in the hands of the judges rather than of the priests or of a king ruling by whim. As would others after him, Sigonio read I Samuel 8:4–9 as a prohibition of monarchy, and argued that the example of the ancient Hebrew Republic provided a precedent and justification for separation of religious and civil spheres.

The United Provinces, which wrested their independence from Habsburg Spain during the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648), were the scene of some of the most vigorous debates surrounding the validity of the Hebrew Republic as a political model. Advocates of a Calvinist theocracy appealed to the notion that the Dutch were the New Israel. Remonstrant legal thinkers Hugo Grotius and Petrus Cunaeus, for their part, argued against a national church and for secular leadership by drawing deeply on Jewish sources from Josephus and the Mishna to Maimonides to argue against priestly rule and for a Sanhedrin-like senate of elders. Engagement with Jewish sources was particularly sophisticated in the Dutch context. Cunaeus and Grotius had studied at Leiden, a hotbed of Hebrew learning since its founding in 1575, and both had studied there informally with Joseph Scaliger. This local tradition of thinking through the separation of religious and secular authorities by comparing the ancient Hebrew Republic with the new Dutch Republic provided a vital intellectual context for one of the foundational

[51] Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

works of both biblical criticism and modern liberal democratic theory, Benedict Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670).

Numerous seventeenth-century English thinkers, including Hobbes, Hooker, Harrington, Milton, Selden, and Locke, brought political, legal, historical and antiquarian questions to their close readings of the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, and Jewish commentaries. As Jason Rosenblatt, G. J. Toomer, and Anthony Grafton have shown, John Selden read the Talmud as a lawyer, a historian and an antiquarian, as a priceless source for understanding the religions of the ancient Near East and for the manifold ways Jewish law and custom might inform the contemporary English law.

For some of the most vexed theological and political questions of the early modern period – the legitimacy of monarchy, the question of idolatry, the moral commandments incumbent upon all peoples by Natural Law (identified with the Noahide Laws) – Christian scholars found ancient and medieval Jewish texts to be invaluable sources. The immediate relevance of the laws of levirate marriage to Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, for example, contributed to the foundation of the Regius chairs of Hebrew at Oxford and Cambridge. To Calvinists, Maimonides's treatise on idolatry, *Hilchot Avoda Zarah*, translated into Latin by Dionysius Vossius and published posthumously by his father Gerardus Joannes in 1641, was a welcome addition to their anti-Catholic arsenal.[52] And some turned their attention from the place of the Jews in Christian salvific history to the place of gentiles in Judaism. In his copy of Bomberg's edition of the *Mishneh Torah*, Sixtinus Amama (1593–1629), Johannes Drusius's successor at Franeker, made particular note that the "righteous among the gentiles" have a share in the world to come.[53]

THE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY JEWISH LIFE

Early modern Christian interest in ancient and medieval Hebrew texts often extended to an interest in contemporary Judaism, and sometimes extended to include extensive observations and descriptions of Jewish life and ritual as practiced in their own day. After the 1490s, this remained possible only in certain regions of Europe: parts of Italy, the Papal territories in France, parts of the Holy Roman Empire, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the United Provinces (from the 1590s on), and England (from the 1650s on).

[52] Katchen, *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis*. Dmitri Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science* (Cambridge, 2015), with extensive discussion of Mainmonides's readers in seventeenth-century England, appeared after this chapter was completed.

[53] See Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* (1524), University of Cambridge, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Library, Q Or M II 1, inside cover.

Jewish converts, like Adriani, Tremellius and Johannes Isaac, could travel. In Spain, France, the Spanish Low Countries and England, Jewish converts to different denominations of Christianity would play pivotal roles as teachers of the traditions in which they were raised. Conversely, scholars from lands without open Jewish communities traveled to places where they could encounter and observe Jewish life, in Europe, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire (including the Holy Land). In Venice, Amsterdam, or the semi-annual book fair at Frankfurt, one encountered three of the largest Jewish communities on the continent. Clenardus and Lancelot Addison explored Jewish life in Morocco; Scaliger met Jews in Avignon and Rome, speaking to them, to their astonishment, in biblical Hebrew; Arias Montano met Jews at Trent. In the Levant, Postel found what he described as "three sects" of Jews: Rabbanites, Karaites, and Samaritans; a century later, Edward Pococke and his student Robert Huntington studied with Jews in Aleppo and bought manuscripts from them, including parts of Maimonides's own autograph of his *Commentary on the Mishnah* and a partial copy of the *Mishneh Torah* authorized by Maimonides himself (now Bodleian Library MS Pococke 295 and MSS Huntington 117 and 80).

Reuchlin had seen a vital connection between his Hebrew studies and the Jews of his time, whose rights he defended. This interest in contemporary Jewish life also found its way into Reuchlin's scholarship. The third section of his treatise on Hebrew accents, for example, is a study of the cantillation marks, written in Masoretic codices but not in Torah scrolls, by which the Hebrew Bible is read liturgically.[54] Comparing the Vulgate with the Hebrew Bible, Reuchlin had noticed that, while the Song of the Sea begins (Exodus 15:1) in the first person plural in the Latin (*cantemus*), the Hebrew opens in the first person singular (*ashira*). In an early example of how the observation of contemporary Judaism informed humanists' antiquarian and philological study of the Hebrew Bible, Reuchlin concluded that Moses himself must have instituted the tradition of chanting the Torah in public. After comparisons with the singing of Homeric epics and before adducing corroborating evidence for Jewish liturgical chanting from Lyra and Pablo of Burgos, Reuchlin notes (protecting himself behind the semblance of hearsay) that the Mosaic tradition of Torah-chanting had been transmitted through an unbroken chain:

> In this matter the Hebrew people have followed their Moses down to this time, they say that they sing the entire Holy Scriptures with a marvelous melody daily in their synagogues with a particular intonation, many things being reported to me since I have not myself been a diligent spectator or listener before this in their services, since the Jews have been driven out and banished from my country almost completely

[54] Johannes Reuchlin, *De accentibus et orthographia linguae hebraicae* (1518). Pembroke College Library, Cambridge, II.3.35 (3) belonged to Lancelot Andrewes.

during my lifetime, nor will they dare to live in any of the territory of the Duke of Swabia, who has provided me with a secure residence for already thirty-five years.[55]

De accentibus is also the first printed book to use Western musical notation to express Jewish music, something Reuchlin could not have learned from a text alone. Throughout the early modern period, Christian observation of contemporary Jewish life would continue to shape the scholarly understanding of the *longue durée* of Jewish history.

Soon Christian scholars could study Jewish life and custom without leaving their studies, as a genre of literature emerged that some historians have come to call, imprecisely, "ethnographies of Judaism." The descriptions of Jewish custom produced by sixteenth-century Jewish converts Victor von Carben and Anthonius Margharita were intentionally and venomously polemical, confirming and feeding anti-Jewish prejudices. The elder Johannes Buxtorf made the genre his own, as he did with Hebrew grammar, lexicography, and bibliography. Buxtorf's *Juden Schul* (1603), translated into Latin as *Synagoga judaica* (1604), drew on his first-hand observation of contemporary Jewish life and ritual, on conversations with Jews employed by his printer, and on recent books of Jewish custom and law, including the Yiddish *Minhogimbukh* and the Hebrew *Shulḥan Arukh*. Buxtorf's book combined detailed description of actual Ashkenazic custom with deeply anti-Jewish commentary, a mixture of fascination and repulsion at play throughout his oeuvre. In turn, Buxtorf's *Juden Schul* drove several Jews – Leone Modena and Menasseh ben Israel – to serve as apologetic defenders of contemporary Judaism in person and in vernacular publications. As Richard Cohen has shown, even the least polemical, most sympathetic of seventeenth-century representations of Jews – such as a depiction of a circumcision performed by a man in priestly vestments illustrating a book by Johannes Leusden – interweave the contemporary and the biblical.[56] In early modern Christian eyes, living Jews were hardly ever individuals, and their early modern descriptions say as much – and often more – about the non-Jewish describers than they do about the Jews described.

NEW HORIZONS IN THE HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP

In the past fifty years, historians of early modern European learned culture have explored a remarkably wide range of sources: archives, unpublished manuscripts, correspondence, rare printed books and their marginal annotations. And they have produced and used new scholarly instruments: bibliographies, inventories of early modern libraries public and private, critical

[55] Ibid., fol. 71 recto. [56] Richard I. Cohen, *Jewish Icons* (Berkeley, 1998), 39–43.

editions, new online catalogues and a vast virtual library of digitized books. One patent outcome is an awareness that the phenomenon traditionally called "Christian Hebraism" was far too many-sided and sophisticated to be covered by that term. Many of the Jewish sources studied by early modern Christian scholars were not in Hebrew, but rather in Greek, Aramaic, Arabic, or Samaritan Hebrew, as well as Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian, Judeo-Spanish, and Yiddish. Joanna Weinberg and Anthony Grafton describe the scholarship of early modern critics such as Joseph Scaliger and Isaac Casaubon as "at once classical, Hebraic, and patristic, in complex combinations," acknowledging that "their enterprise lacks a modern name."[57] In the work of Scaliger, Drusius, and Daniel Heinsius, for example, a historical picture emerged of a Greek-speaking Jewish culture, whose literature included Philo, Josephus, and Paul. It was a picture that radically challenged traditional understandings of Jewish history and of the ancient Mediterranean world. "A Student well versed in their Language and Writings would find it no great difficulty to translate the New Testament into Talmudick language," John Lightfoot asserted in 1655, "so close doth it speak all along to their common speech."[58] The Christian study of the early Church and the language of the New Testament would never be the same again.

The singular "Christian Hebraism" seems therefore to have run its course as a helpful category. On the shoulders of giants, the historian now sees a scholarly panorama, a wide variety of disciplines, learned practices, and confessional erudition – theology, biblical exegesis, religious polemic, mystical speculation, homiletics, grammar, and lexicography, surely, but also ancient and ecclesiastical history, antiquarianism, historical chronology, comparative legal history, political thought, philosophy, medicine, geography, poetry, and the beginnings of the comparative study of religion – to which, in the course of the early modern period, Jewish texts in several different languages became critical.[59] New horizons beckon:

[57] Grafton and Weinberg, *"I Have Always Loved the Holy Tongue,"* 290.

[58] Lightfoot, *The Harmony Chronicle*, sig. a2 recto.

[59] See, among others, Francis Schmidt, "The Hasideans and the Ancient Jewish 'Sects': A Seventeenth-Century Controversy," in Sacha Stern, ed., *Sects and Sectarianism in Jewish History* (Leiden, 2011), 187–203; Kristine Haugen, "Hebrew Poetry Transformed, or, Scholarship Invincible Between Renaissance and Enlightenment," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 75 (2012), 1–29; Katherine van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthain, eds., *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford, 2012); Zur Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds: Geography, Religion, and Scholarship, 1550–1700* (Leiden, 2012); Daniel Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus: Athanasius Kircher and the Secrets of Antiquity* (Chicago, 2013); Dmitri Levitin, "John Spencer's *De Legibus Hebraeorum* (1683–85) and 'Enlightened' Sacred History: A New Interpretation," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 76 (2013), 49–92; Peter N. Miller, *Peiresc's Mediterranean World* (Cambridge, MA, 2015).

unpublished material, unexplored archives, uncatalogued libraries, forgotten scholars, neglected books, unknown connections. The work remains immense, and the day short, but our understanding of the interconnected histories of Christianity and Judaism may be deepened and ever renewed.

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CHAPTER 13

RABBINIC CULTURE AND THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HALAKHAH

JAY R. BERKOVITZ

Rabbinic culture and Jewish law were profoundly transformed amid sweeping structural changes in early modern European society. As in the case of religion in general, the social and intellectual foundations of medieval Judaism were shaken by the invention of printing, by unprecedented advances in scientific knowledge, by the rise of humanism, and by the commercial revolution of the seventeenth century. Manifestations of change were evident in the wider access to elite culture and its concomitant popularization, the standardization of legal traditions, the rise of religious skepticism and the attendant disparagement of clerical authority, as well as the overall blurring of boundaries between the sacred and the profane. In general, however, this transformation was both uneven and restrained. Its unevenness resulted from substantial variations in the conditions of Jewish life from region to region, and it owed its muted character to the inherently conservative social and cultural ethos of traditional Judaism. In the area of law, much depended on the degree of receptivity or resistance displayed by jurists to the challenges posed by the society around them.

Research into the history of early modern rabbinic culture has lagged behind most other areas of Jewish studies. Codes, responsa literature, and legal hermeneutics have not been subjected to the kind of rigorous investigation more commonly applied to medieval rabbinic literature. Earlier attempts to write a comprehensive history of Jewish law, most notably the valuable encyclopedic works of Chaim Tchernowitz and Menaḥem Elon, have centered on the history of legal concepts and the contributions of leading halakhic authorities. But such works have consistently failed to consider Jewish law either in light of the social, economic, and cultural forces that shaped its development or from the standpoint of performance and reception history. Nor has the study of Jewish law kept pace with the field of comparative legal history. The present chapter will map the development of rabbinic culture and Jewish law in early modern Europe by

considering the interplay of printing, rabbinic authority, and the impact of social, economic, and political factors.[1]

Of the forces that shaped Jewish culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, certainly the most powerful was the massive relocation of European Jewish populations and the wide-ranging social and political disruptions that ensued. Beginning with expulsions from Iberia, Navarre, and Provence between 1492 and 1501, and following the deterioration of conditions in central Europe in the sixteenth century, Jews and *conversos* resettled in England, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, and the Land of Israel. After the Khmelnytsky massacres of 1648–9, significant numbers of Ashkenazic Jews migrated to areas where few had lived before, or to communities where Jews were already living or had once lived. Improvements in transport and communication eased movement within the Jewish world while also facilitating cross-cultural encounters and the migration of knowledge. Jews of Sephardic, Ashkenazic, and Italian descent came into more frequent contact with each other, though the tendency toward social and cultural distinctiveness remained preponderate, as ritual customs, liturgical traditions, and typologies of rabbinic leadership indicate.[2] In this changing environment, rabbis were among the most mobile members of Jewish society. It was not uncommon for rabbis within the Sephardic and Ashkenazic orbits to be hired from a distance, as in the case of the Amsterdam community that turned to Italy and North Africa, or to be imported from the Balkans, North Africa, and Amsterdam, as the example of Livorno suggests. In the western Ashkenazic community of Metz, many appointees had served previously in Prague, Poland, and Germany. In some instances, rabbinic posts in southern and northern Europe and in the eastern Mediterranean were filled by emissaries from the Land of Israel.[3]

These patterns of migration and mobility created conditions for a radical metamorphosis of the rabbinate. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, rabbis emerged as a class of sacred functionaries sharply differentiated from the communal lay leadership. Owing to the effects of professionalization, rabbinic functions were narrowly defined by lay officials who oversaw the

[1] See Chaim Tchernowitz, *Toldot ha-Halakhah*, 3 vols. (New York, 1934); Tchernowitz, *Toldot ha-Poseqim*, 3 vols. (New York, 1946), esp. vol. III; and Menachem Elon, *Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia, 1994).

[2] On the obduracy and resilience of rabbinic culture and liturgical traditions in early modern Alsace and Lorraine, see the discussion in Jay R. Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650–1860* (Philadelphia, 2004), 63–85.

[3] David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry* (Princeton, 2011), 24–37; and Moses Shulvass, *From East to West: The Westward Migration of Jews from Eastern Europe during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Detroit, 1971).

administration of political and social affairs.[4] Rabbinic contracts stipulated in no uncertain terms that rabbis were subordinate to lay authority, initially in matters concerning the administration of public law and social discipline. In some communities, such as Bayonne (in southwestern France), rabbinic decisions were explicitly limited to the ritual sphere. In the Ottoman Empire, rabbis enjoyed the right to impose the *ḥerem* ("communal ban"), but, as a rule, rabbinic courts did not possess the power to enforce their decisions since either party was free to resort to the Muslim courts. In Sephardic communities, such as Livorno, Amsterdam, London, and Hamburg, the *mahamad* assumed jurisdiction over all commercial matters and its rulings were considered to have the standing of Torah law. In the realm of ritual, they were expected to rule according to Jewish law and custom, though they were authorized to refer cases to the rabbis at their discretion. In Livorno, this state of affairs was vigorously denounced by Rabbi Jacob Sasportas; R. Moses Ḥagiz of Amsterdam went even further in asserting his authority over the *mahamad* in the course of his efforts to eradicate Sabbateanism.[5] In Germanic lands, signs of erosion in the prestige of the rabbinate were already apparent in the fifteenth century, whereas in eastern Europe rabbinic authority declined somewhat later, upon the establishment of the Council of the Four Lands.[6] Whether one can speak of a decline of the rabbinate as an institution, especially in terms of the power it was able to wield, is admittedly uncertain. But what was new was the undeniably overt and often ideological challenge to rabbinic authority that emerged in the early modern era.

The shifting boundaries of early modern rabbinic culture were defined in large measure by these and other unconcealed challenges to rabbinic authority and its core assumptions. Deism and anticlericalism made deep inroads into the Jewish community, at times via *converso* heterodoxy or, more generally, by means of barbed criticism of the rabbinic establishment. The cogency of the rabbinic tradition was questioned, as were the judicial authority of the rabbis and several fundamental religious doctrines, such as the immortality of the soul. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,

[4] Israel Yuval, "Antiqui et moderni: Periodization and Self-Awareness in Ashkenaz" [Hebrew], *Zion* 57 (1992), 369–94.

[5] Alfredo Toaff, "The Controversy Between R. Sasportas and the Jewish Community of Leghorn" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 9 (1964), 169–91. On the use of the *ḥerem* by lay officials in Amsterdam, see Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden, 2000), 108–42. On Ḥagiz, see Elisheva Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatean Controversies* (New York, 1994), esp. 104–11.

[6] See Mordecai Breuer, "The Status of the Rabbinate in the Leadership of Ashkenazic Communities in the Sixteenth Century" [Hebrew], *Zion* 41 (1976), 47–66; and Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 74–81, 86–93.

rabbinic leaders went on the offensive in order to discredit antinomian and deviant movements such as Sabbateanism and Frankism, much as they later sought to delegitimize the social critique and ideological assault on rabbinic Judaism advanced by Hasidism and the Haskalah. They branded those who subscribed to these views as heretics, presumably in order to protect the community of the faithful.[7] Attempts to integrate Jewish philosophical and scientific works within the traditional curriculum of Torah study in Poland were an equally contested matter in the sixteenth century. Spurred by the arrival of new works produced by northern Italian printers, several leading Ashkenazic rabbis, notably Moses Isserles, Judah Loeb ben Beẓalel, and Yomtov Lipmann Heller, studied philosophy and incorporated philosophical ideas into their writings. Isserles was the first major rabbinic figure to engage in scientific learning. He published a work on astronomy, *Torat ha-Olah* (Prague, 1570), and wrote an unpublished commentary on George Peurbach's *Theoricae novae planetarum*.[8] This trend closely resembled developments in Renaissance Italy, where a strong fascination with a broad range of learning came to include biblical exegesis, Hebrew grammar, Kabbalah, *belles lettres*, science, rhetoric, and philosophy. No equivalent synthesis of general and religious studies emerged in central and eastern Europe, however. Philosophy and science failed to achieve the same prominence as in Italy, in part because many viewed these disciplines as inconsistent with the study of the Talmud and Halakhah, and because opportunities for cultural interchange with non-Jews were far more limited. While Isserles defended the tradition of philosophical study, referring to rationalism as a "legacy of the fathers," only a few viewed such studies as part of the Ashkenazic cultural mainstream. In some cases, those who embraced these disciplines were accused of overstepping the boundaries of rabbinic culture.[9]

[7] See Adam Sutcliffe, "Regulating Sociability: Rabbinical Authority and Jewish Christian Interaction in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam," in Daniel Frank and Matt Goldish, eds., *Rabbinic Culture and its Critics: Jewish Authority, Dissent, and Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Times* (Detroit, 2008), 289–312; Joseph Davis, "Drawing the Line: Views of Jewish Heresy and Belief among Medieval and Early Modern Ashkenazic Jews," in Frank and Goldish, eds., *Rabbinic Culture and its Critics: Jewish Authority, Dissent, and Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Times* (Detroit, 2007), 165–9; and Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, 2010).

[8] Jacob Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity: Late Sixteenth-Century Jewish Literature in Poland and Ashkenaz* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1990). For a discussion of the interest in science and philosophy in Ashkenazic culture, see David Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven, 1995), ch. 2.

[9] See Robert Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1993); Lawrence Kaplan, "Rabbi Mordekhai Jaffe and the Evolution of Jewish Culture in Poland," in Bernard Cooperman, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge,

Notwithstanding the expanded role of talmudic law in medieval civil, family, and ritual life, it was only in the early modern era that autonomous communities enacted comprehensive legislation to administer the full range of religious and civil affairs. Communal law, though drawing on talmudic and medieval Halakhah, developed more freely in the public and private law sectors. Public civil law governed the overall administration of each community, its elections, tax assessment and collection, and the relations of individuals to the governing authority. Private civil law concerned property, commercial transactions, family, and inheritance issues. Ritual law encompassed daily observances, regulations concerning Sabbath and holidays, dietary restrictions, prayer, and purification rites, and related as well to the main elements of family law, such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The governance structure and institutional framework of the community provided a natural setting for the development of private and public law, whereas ritual law remained principally under the supervision and control of rabbis. *Posekim* ("decisors") issued legal rulings in all areas of Jewish law, and these were frequently published in collections of rabbinic responsa.

Jurisdiction in civil affairs underwent a parallel development. Although the authority to resolve civil disputes was among the most highly valued and the most vigorously defended privileges enjoyed by Jews in the Middle Ages, it was not until the early modern era that rabbinic courts were formally established as communal institutions. In larger communities, such as Frankfurt, Metz, and Prague, rabbinic courts heard cases relating to civil and criminal law, inheritance, guardianship, marriage, and divorce. Rabbis and lay officials warned repeatedly that the *bet din* was the only legitimate venue for the adjudication of civil cases involving Jews.[10] Efforts to reinforce the authority of rabbinic courts were linked to the growing importance attached to the concept of a unified judicial system. It found expression in the resistance of *posekim* to the use of the *kim li* argument (lit. "it is established for me"), for fear that this would undermine the efforts of early modern rabbinic courts to adjudicate in an orderly fashion.[11] Those

MA, 1983), 266–82; and David E. Fishman, "Rabbi Moshe Isserles and the Study of Science among Polish Rabbis," *Science in Context* 10, 4 (1997), 571–88. On philosophical differences between Isserles and his leading critic, Solomon Luria, see Asher Siev, ed., *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rema* (Jerusalem, 1970), no. 6.

[10] Recourse to gentile courts was permitted when one party either refused to appear before the *bet din* or repudiated its judgment. It was also sanctioned when a case involved matters of special interest to the governing authorities. See Elon, *Jewish Law*, I, 13–17, 28, 31–2.

[11] See ibid., II, 666–7; III, 1282–3. Using the *kim li* plea, a defendant would draw upon the multiplicity of halakhic views and thereby avail himself of a minority opinion that was favorable to his own position. For the case against reliance on the *kim li* argument, see Jonathan Eibeschütz, *Urim ve-Tumim, Kizur Tokpo Kohen* (Karlsruhe, 1775–7), s. 124.

who took their disputes to gentile courts were consistently excoriated, though the historical record reveals unambiguously that Jews often did not heed these warnings, as is evident in inheritance disputes in territories controlled by Muslims after the Spanish expulsion. In Christian lands, despite the shrill rhetoric that typified rabbinic complaints, there is unmistakable evidence that litigation in gentile courts was unremarkable and could not be prevented.[12] The fact that civil contracts duly executed in gentile courts were accorded full legitimacy by medieval halakhists suggests some degree of cooperation between the two legal systems. This was certainly true in cases pertaining to purchase and sale transactions and to the collection of debts.[13]

The question of jurisdiction over civil disputes was a common source of lay–rabbinic tensions. Lay officials, for their part, frequently objected to the involvement of rabbinic judges in such matters, while rabbis assumed that it was within their prerogative to compel litigants to select a *bet din* that was acceptable to each side. In Germany, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Italy, from the sixteenth century, lay courts exercised jurisdiction alongside rabbinic courts in civil and commercial disputes. In Livorno, the community required all commercial transactions to be governed by mercantile custom, "as if it were specifically determined to be a law of the Torah." Nevertheless, despite the ubiquity of lay tribunals, rabbis did not withhold their disapproval.[14] While early modern *posekim* were generally of the opinion that communal legislation did not draw its authority directly from the Talmud, they represented their own rulings as perfectly aligned with the principles of talmudic law as interpreted by *rishonim* ("medieval authorities").

[12] See Joseph Hacker, "Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire: Its Scope," in Shmuel Almog, Israel Bartal, and Michael Graetz, eds., *Transition and Change in Modern Jewish History* (Jerusalem, 1987) [Hebrew], 349–88; Shalom Rosenberg, "Emunat Ḥakhamim," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 316. For the assertion that it was impossible to prevent members of the Metz community from approaching the French civil courts because the trend had already become so widespread, see Eibeschütz, *Urim ve-Tumim, Ḥoshen Mishpat* 26.

[13] See B. T. Gittin 10b–11a, 19b; Isserles, *Shulḥan Arukh, Ḥoshen Mishpat* 68, 369:11. For an extended discussion of the legal issues, see Shmuel Shilo, *Dina de-Malkhuta Dina* (Jerusalem, 1974), 312–402. On the Frankfurt *bet din*, see Edward Fram, *A Window on Their World: The Court Diaries of Rabbi Ḥayyim Gundersheim, Frankfurt am Main, 1773–1794* (Cincinnati, 2012); on Metz, see Jay R. Berkovitz, *Protocols of Justice: The Pinkas of the Metz Rabbinic Court, 1771–1789*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2014).

[14] See Isserles, *Shulḥan Arukh, Ḥoshen Mishpat* 8:1 and 22:1; Isserles, *Resp. Rema* no. 33; Solomon Luria, *Resp. ha-Maharshal*, no. 93. Elon, *Jewish Law*, I, 27–8, 31–2. See *Resp. Shevut Yaakov*, pt. 2 (Offenbach, 1711), no. 143. On early modern lay courts, see Jacob Katz, "The Rule of Halakhah in Traditional Jewish Society: Theory and Praxis," in *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem, 1998), 175–8.

The *bet din*, in their estimation, was the equivalent of a lay court whose authority rested on the consent of the two opposing parties to a dispute. Cases were adjudicated according to what was, in effect, common law, and this permitted Halakhah to develop in the civil sphere, beyond talmudic law.[15] By the 1770s, rabbinic acquiescence to the waning of civil autonomy and to the narrowing of judicial prerogatives had become more prevalent. Under the impact of wide-scale forces of centralization, Jewish communities were pressured to surrender their judicial authority in areas of law that came under the jurisdiction of the state. In the case of Metz, just months after the French Revolution, rabbinic courts no longer convened formally to hear civil cases.[16]

Although rabbis lacked the power to implement unilaterally the rule of Halakhah in communal matters, they were frequently approached for their legal opinions on questions of social, economic, and political relevance to public law. They served much like jurisconsults with respect to *ius commune* ("common law") and *ius proprium* ("local law"); in certain instances, they lobbied for the adoption of a particular halakhic position.[17] In the fifteenth century, Rabbi Israel Isserlein endeavored to introduce more rigorous eligibility requirements for participation as communal leaders. He stipulated that an appointment to the ranks of communal leadership ought to be based on the same standards used in making judicial appointments.[18] In the following century, this proviso was codified by Rabbi Moses Isserles, but with a subtle shift in emphasis: "Communal leaders . . . are comparable to judges, and it is prohibited to appoint among them anyone who is ineligible to judge on account of moral depravity."[19] The limitations imposed by

[15] The rabbis represented their rulings as perfectly aligned with the principles of talmudic law as interpreted by medieval authorities. See Yedidya Dinari, *The Rabbis of Germany and Austria at the Close of the Middle Ages* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1984) 125–8; Breuer, "Status of the Rabbinate," 47–54; Edward Fram, *Ideals Face Reality: Jewish Law and Life in Poland* (Cincinnati, 1997), 46. On the authority of communal legislation, cf. Elon, *Jewish Law*, II, 687–8.

[16] Ezekiel Landau, for example, approved the transfer of bankruptcy proceedings to a secular court on the grounds of *dina d'malkhuta dina* ("the law of the state is the law"). See Landau, *Derushei Ha-Ẓelah*, fol. 32. Cf. Frances Malino, "Attitudes Toward Jewish Communal Autonomy in Prerevolutionary France," in Malino and Phyllis Cohen Albert, eds., *Essays in Modern Jewish History: A Tribute to Ben Halpern* (East Brunswick, NJ, 1982), 95–117.

[17] See Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 38–47.

[18] Israel Isserlein, *Resp. Terumat HaDeshen, Pesaqim u-Khetavim* (Jerusalem, 1991), no. 214. On the authority of the *bet din* in fifteenth-century Germany, see Dinari, *Rabbis of Germany and Austria*, 119ff.

[19] *Ḥoshen Mishpat* 37:22. See Dinari, *Rabbis of Germany and Austria*, 52–5, and Kenneth Stow, "Holy Body, Holy Society: Conflicting Medieval Structural Perceptions," in Joshua Prawer, R. J. Z. Werblowsky, and Ben Zion Kedar, eds., *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land* (New York, 1998), 151–71.

Isserles accentuated the primacy of moral credentials without making reference to their legal expertise or religious qualifications.[20] In early modern Poland, rabbis recognized the authority of lay councils to administer fines and punishments, to extradite criminals to the gentile authorities, and to expel Jews when deemed necessary. Isserles went as far as recognizing the right of communal leaders to issue legislation without prior rabbinic consultation, provided the laws met accepted standards of justice, but he also authorized rabbis to veto laws that were inconsistent with Halakhah.[21] In the seventeenth century, rabbis struggled mightily to maintain their authority in communal affairs even though *rishonim* generally did not require rabbinic consent when the entire community agreed on an initiative. Rabbi Joel Sirkes regularly excoriated lay officials for enacting legislation that he considered in violation of halakhic norms.[22] In one instance, he explained that communal stipulations were not valid without the assent of a major halakhic authority, though he conceded that the *gedol ha-dor* (the generation's outstanding halakhic figure of the region) was required to obtain public authorization before he could impose even emergency fines.[23] Conversely, Rabbi Ya'ir Ḥayyim Bacharach (1638–1702) of Worms displayed a determination to strengthen the foundations of communal authority, even when this meant curtailing liberties to which individuals were otherwise entitled according to Halakhah.[24] Against the view of Sirkes, he denied that the assent of a major rabbinic authority (*adam ḥashuv*) was necessary to ratify communal legislation, and he firmly acknowledged the sovereignty of lay communal leaders "who are elected and who enjoy the public trust." Although Bacharach's position was formulated in exceptional terms, communal and lay governance, and even recourse to gentile courts, would gain legitimacy among rabbinic authorities in the west.[25]

[20] On the difficulty of defining the boundary between communal legislation and ritual law, see Elon, *Jewish Law*, II, 707–12.

[21] Isserles, *Resp. Rema*, no. 73.

[22] See, for example, Sirkes's view concerning the seizure of merchandise belonging to a bankrupt debtor, in Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 151–5.

[23] See Joel Sirkes, *Bayit Ḥadash* (Krakow, 1631–9), *Tur Ḥoshen Mishpat* 2.

[24] On the concern for potential harm to the public reputation of the *kahal* as the supreme governing body, and on the principle of collective interest, see *Resp. Ḥavvot Ya'ir* (Frankfurt, 1699), nos. 127 and 186.

[25] See ibid., nos. 57, 156, 157, and the discussion in Jay R. Berkovitz, "Crisis and Authority in Early Modern Ashkenaz," *Jewish History* 26, 1–2 (2012), 179–99, and Berkovitz, *Protocols of Justice*, I, 112, 116, 120–2, 131, 162–3, 188–92. Also see Jay R. Berkovitz, "The Persona of a *Poseq*: Law and Self-Fashioning in Seventeenth-Century Ashkenaz," *Modern Judaism* 32, 3 (2012), 251–69. Sirkes limited the definition of *adam ḥashuv* to one who had gained renown among the great men of the generation; cf. *Shulḥan Arukh, Ḥoshen Mishpat* 231.

With the advent of printing, rabbinic culture was revolutionized in three important respects. First, it enabled wider access to rabbinic texts by creating new communities of readers. The efflorescence of books and handbooks on morality and ethics, proverbs, and sermons offers the clearest evidence that the attainment of a broader readership had become a clear and conscious goal. Among the most favored works were the biblical commentary *Keli Yakar*, by Ephraim Lunshits, which contained homiletic interpretations of contemporary Jewish mores, and several ethical works inspired by Kabbalah, such as *Sefer Ḥaredim*, by Eliezer Azikri, and *Iggeret Shmuel*, by Samuel Ozeidah. Popular anthologies, such as *Reshit Ḥokhmah*, by Elijah de Vidas, *Menorat ha-Ma'or*, by Isaac Aboab, and *Shevet Musar*, by Elijah ha-Cohen, likewise gained wide circulation, as did an increasing number of works published in Yiddish, such as *Lev Tov*, by Isaac ben Eliezer of Posen, and *Simḥat ha-Nefesh*, by Elḥanan Kirchan.[26] Seeking to attract sectors of the community that did not read Hebrew (women, men who were not traditionally educated, and *conversos*), printers began to disseminate works prepared in the vernacular. These included mainly works in Yiddish and Ladino. Yiddish *tkhines*, much like the Yiddish Bible commentary *Tsena urena* (1622), not only provide evidence of women's access to sacred texts, but, more generally, illustrate how elite culture was rendered in a popular idiom.[27] This burgeoning literature confirms that the chasm separating elite and popular culture was partly bridged. In fact, due to the strong emphasis on textuality in the Jewish religious tradition, folk culture was rarely detached entirely from its literary sources. As a rule, manifestations of folk religion in early modern Europe emerged alongside the normative system of Halakhah, and, in due course, numerous protective rites and folkways coalesced with biblical, midrashic, and talmudic sources, as exemplified by childbirth rituals.[28] But precisely how the availability of printed books impacted study habits, the nature of

[26] According to Zeev Gries, ethical works constituted approximately 14 percent of the books printed in eastern Europe and 7 percent overall in Europe. See Zeev Gries, *The Book in the Jewish World, 1700–1900* (London, 2007), 40–56.

[27] See Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston, 1999), and Moshe Rosman, "Innovative Tradition: Jewish Culture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth," in David Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York, 2002), 863–85.

[28] See Herman Pollack, *Jewish Folkways in Germanic Lands (1648–1806)* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), 16–17; Freddy Raphaël, "Rites de naissance et medecine populaire dans le judaïsme rural d'Alsace," *Revue de la société d'ethnographie française* 1 (1971), 83–94; and Elisheva Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 2004), esp. chs. 1 and 3.

the teacher–student relationship, and religious authority remains an important question that has yet to be fully investigated.[29]

A second revolutionary effect of printing was its expansion of the literary canon of rabbinic culture. This was most evident in the areas of biblical exegesis, including supercommentaries on the twelfth-century commentary of Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi);[30] talmudic commentaries; ethical works; legal codes; responsa; *minhagim* ("religious customaries"); rules of conduct; and halakhic monographs. Related to these was a profusion of works devoted to the explication of *aggadic* literature, commentaries on liturgy, and interpretations of philosophical and mystical writings. To the foregoing trend may be added the consolidation of *Midrash Rabbah*, published with standard commentaries such as *Matenot Kehunah*.[31] Finally, the circulation of printed books led to unprecedented uniformity in religious practice, especially as exemplified by the far-reaching impact of the *Shulḥan Arukh* (see later in this chapter).

The realm of Jewish law and ritual overwhelmingly dominated Hebrew book production. As in the medieval period, Halakhah was the most valued subject of Torah study and those who authored works of halakhic scholarship enjoyed the greatest prestige within Jewish society. The literary categories of early modern Jewish law also corresponded to those of the Middle Ages: (1) codes and commentaries; (2) compendia of customs; (3) ethical literature; (4) *novellae*; and (5) responsa. But in terms of form and content, each of these genres embodied characteristics that reflected the intellectual and social transformations marking the new era. Despite the overwhelming changes that first occurred in the sixteenth century, the assumptions, methods, and central themes of Jewish law were characterized by an astonishing degree of constancy. Even the new emphasis on textuality, which undeniably challenged traditional modes of rabbinic authority, was not quite so revolutionary. While it cannot be denied that, in the new milieu of movable type, the text came to rival the teacher as the locus of authority and the study of sacred texts showed signs of democratization, these developments proceeded relatively slowly and, prior to the late eighteenth century, were limited

[29] See Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1979), I, 71–3; Elhanan Reiner, "The Ashkenazic Elite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book," *Polin* 10 (1997), 85–98, and Elon, *Jewish Law*, III, 1138–48.

[30] Among the most important examples of supercommentaries on Rashi are Judah Leib (Maharal of Prague), *Gur Aryeh* (Prague, 1578); Mordechai Jaffe, *Levush ha-Orah* (1604); Shabbetai Bass, *Siftei Ḥakhamim* (1712); Eliyahu Mizraḥi, *Sefer Mizraḥi* (Venice, 1526); and Ephraim Luntshitz, *Kli Yakar* (1602). Noteworthy among the new works on *midrash* was *Midrash Rabbah 'im Perush Matnot Kehunah* (Prague, 1587–8).

[31] Gries, *The Book*, 39–40.

primarily to elite circles. Of greater consequence was the intellectual cross-fertilization inspired by printing. Unparalleled access to medieval Sephardic commentaries on the Talmud and Halakhah became available to students of Jewish law in Ashkenazic communities (such as Berlin, Fürth, and Metz) across the continent. In the sixteenth century, an upsurge in the study of Mishnah as a self-standing text echoed the rediscovery of classical literatures during the Renaissance, though it is likely that it was also a response to the excesses of *pilpul* (a casuistic style of Talmud study).[32] In rather dramatic terms, printing also facilitated the passage of Kabbalah from the periphery to the mainstream of rabbinic discourse. But the most enduring effect of printing was manifested in the standardization of established traditions of talmudic literature, legal codes, and commentaries, and in the dissemination of learned culture to distant communities.[33]

Printing facilitated the appearance and success of the most influential Jewish law code of the early modern period, the *Shulḥan Arukh* [The Prepared Table], first published in Venice in 1565. The author, Rabbi Joseph Karo (1488–1575), was a native of Spain who was exiled to Portugal and subsequently lived in Turkey and Egypt before settling in Safed in 1535. There he composed his compendium of Jewish law, which he modeled on the structure of the fourteenth-century *Arba'ah Turim* by Jacob ben Asher. Karo's own extensive commentary (*Beit Yosef*) to the *Turim* was the basis for many of the rulings he published in the *Shulḥan Arukh*.[34] Keenly aware of the unprecedented power of printing, Karo

[32] Among the leading figures in the revitalization of Mishnah study were the Maharal of Prague, Yomtov Lipmann Heller, and Abraham, Isaiah, and Sheftel Horowitz. See Joseph M. Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller: Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* (Oxford, 2004), 66–7.

[33] On the impact of printing on rabbinic creativity, see Reiner, "The Ashkenazi Elite"; Reiner, "Transformations in the Polish and Ashkenazi Yeshivot During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and the Dispute over *Pilpul*," in Israel Bartal, Chavah Turnianski, and Ezra Mendelson, eds., *Ke-Minhag Ashkenaz u-Folin Sefer Yovel le-Chone Shmeruk* (Jerusalem, 1989) [Hebrew], 9–80; Yaakov Spiegel, "The Influence of Printing on the Writings of Polish Rabbinic Scholars in the Sixteenth Century," in Arnold Enker and Sinai Deutsch, eds., *Studies in Jewish Law* (Ramat Gan, 1998), 297–310; and Elisheva Carlebach, "The Status of the Talmud in Early Modern Europe," in Gabriel Goldstein and Sharon Lieberman Mintz, eds., *Printing the Talmud: From Bomberg to Schottenstein* (New York, 2008), 79–89.

[34] Isadore Twersky, "The Shulḥan Arukh: Enduring Code of Jewish Law," *Judaism* 16 (1967), 141–58. It is important to point out that many of the most important discussions of Jewish law were the various glosses to the *Arba'ah Turim*, including Karo's *Beit Yosef*, Sirkes's *Bayit Ḥadash*, and Falk's *Prishah* and *Drishah* – all of which were printed in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. See Spiegel, "The Influence of Printing," 299–304.

aspired to two related goals: to universalize Halakhah and to make it accessible to lay members of Jewish society. Legal rulings in the *Shulḥan Arukh* reflected the consensus in three earlier codes: Isaac Alfasi's *Sefer ha-Halakhot* and Moses Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*, each of Sephardic provenance, and Asher ben Yeḥi'el's *Sefer ha-Pesaqim*, which largely followed Ashkenazic tradition. Where there were differences of opinion, Karo ruled according to the majority, which meant that his code overwhelmingly conformed to Sephardic tradition. The stature of the *Shulḥan Arukh*, which rapidly came to be viewed in its day as the final authority and standard work of Halakhah, was enhanced further by its republication in Krakow in 1578–80 together with the Ashkenazic glosses of Moses Isserles (1529–72). Alongside the *Mappah* [The Tablecloth], as the Isserles glosses were known, and a substantial number of seventeenth-century commentaries, the expanded *Shulḥan Arukh* became a key factor in the convergence of Sephardic and Ashkenazic legal traditions, much as the publication of *Miqra'ot Gedolot*, known originally by the Latin title *Magna Biblia rabbinica*, presented the classical medieval commentaries of the Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions on the same page.[35] This trend became even more pronounced in the first half of the eighteenth century when works of Sephardic *rishonim* – Ramban, Rashba, and Ritva – were reprinted by Ashkenazic presses and thus received exposure among advanced students of the Talmud.[36]

Reactions ranging from vigorous resistance to unmitigated praise underscore the innovative and controversial nature of the *Shulḥan Arukh*. Medieval codification, undertaken almost exclusively by Sephardic authorities, was largely a product of the highly centralized culture to which they belonged. In the decentralized world of medieval Ashkenaz, by contrast, *posekim* were engaged primarily in writing legal commentaries, talmudic *novellae*, and responsa.[37] Sixteenth-century Ashkenazic critics were alarmed that the abbreviated style of codes and of halakhic handbooks threatened to displace the Talmud as the undisputed source of Halakhah, and, worse, that it would ultimately suppress the dynamic and creative

[35] Foremost among the commentaries to the *Shulḥan Arukh* published in the seventeenth century were Joshua ha-Kohen Falk, *Sefer Me'irat 'Einayim* (Prague, 1628); David ha-Levi, *Turei Zahav* (Lublin, 1646); Shabbetai ha-Kohen, *Siftei Kohen* (Krakow, 1647); Abraham Gombiner, *Magen Avraham* (Dyhernfurth, 1692); and Shmuel ben Uri Shraga Feivush, *Beit Shmuel* (Fürth, 1694). On the *Magna Biblia Rabbinica*, see Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 99–132.

[36] Israel Ta-Shema, "Ḥiddushei ha-Rishonim: Their Order of Publication" [Hebrew], *Kiryat Sefer* 50 (1974–5), 325–36.

[37] Ta-Shema, *Knesset meḥaqrim: iyyunim ba-Sifrut ha-Rabbanit b'Yemei ha-Beinayim* (Jerusalem, 2004), I, 52–3.

processes of legal interpretation.[38] Solomon Luria (1510–73) asserted that codes characteristically imposed limits on judicial freedom. Talmudic interpretation, not legal traditions of *pesaq*, ought to remain the sole determinant of Halakhah. Isserles, for his part, based his rulings on the principle of *hilkheta ke-vatra'ei* ("the law is decided in accordance with later authorities"), which had become more prevalent among Ashkenazic *posekim*. Karo and most Sephardic authorities did not apply the principle as consistently, though the responsa of Rabbi David ben Zimra indicate a stronger affinity to the rule.[39] In the eighteenth century, a number of Ashkenazic *posekim*, out of concern for the growing inattention to talmudic sources, questioned the suitability of *hilkheta ke-vatra'ei* as a basis for decision making. Rabbi Ezekiel Landau and the Gaon of Vilna were among the most prominent of these figures.[40] The standardization of local traditions was also a highly controversial aspect of codification. Ḥayyim ben Bezalel Friedberg (1515–88), Isserles's most strident critic, bemoaned the failure to acknowledge the independent standing of *minhag*, generally, and the distinctive character of Ashkenazic ritual and its local variations, in particular.[41]

Despite these challenges to its authority, the *Shulḥan Arukh* won an astonishing degree of acceptance in the ensuing centuries, thanks in part to the scores of commentaries and supercommentaries that solidified its stature as the pre-eminent code of Jewish law in both Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities. Rabbi David ben Samuel ha-Levi (1586–1667) produced the *Turei Zahav*, known by the acronym *Taz*, a commentary

[38] See Elon, *Jewish Law*, III, 1385–94; and Reiner, "Transformations in the Polish and Ashkenazi Yeshivot," 46–7.

[39] See Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity*, 156–9. In several instances, Luria did refer to the principle of *hilkheta ke-vatra'ei*. On *hilkheta ke-vatra'ei*, see Elon, *Jewish Law*, III, 1345–56; Israel Ta-Shema, "The Law is in Accord with the Later Authority – 'Hilkhata Ke-Batrai': Historical Observations on a Legal Rule," in Hanina Ben-Menahem and Neil Hecht, eds., *Authority, Process, and Method: Studies in Jewish Law* (Amsterdam, 1998), 101–28. Cf. Samuel Morell, *Precedent and Judicial Discretion: The Case of Joseph ibn Lev* (Atlanta, 1991), and Morell, *Studies in the Judicial Methodology of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra* (Lanham, MD, 2004), 291–306.

[40] See Tchernowitz, *Toldot ha-Poseqim*, III, 208–58, and Daniel Sinclair, "Halakhic Methodology in the Post-Emancipation Period: Case Studies in the Responsa of R. Yechezkel Landau," *Le'ela* (April, 1998), 16–22.

[41] Ḥayyim ben Bezalel composed *Viku'aḥ Mayyim Ḥayyim*, a polemical work against R. Moses Isserles's *Torat Ḥatat*. See Eric Zimmer, *Fiery Embers of the Scholars: The Trials and Tribulations of German Rabbis in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* [Hebrew] (Be'er Sheva, 1999), 186 and 210–24; and Byron L. Sherwin, "In the Shadows of Greatness: Rabbi Ḥayyim Ben Betsalel of Friedberg," *Jewish Social Studies* 37 (1975), 35–60. Also see Leon Wiener Dow, "Opposition to the 'Shulḥan Aruch': Articulating a Common Law Conception of Halacha," *Hebraic Political Studies* 3 (2008), 352–76.

to the four parts of the *Shulḥan Arukh*; Rabbi Shabbetai ben Meir ha-Kohen (1621–62) composed *Siftei Kohen* (1646), known as *Shakh*, a commentary to *Yoreh De'ah* and *Ḥoshen Mishpat*; and Rabbi Abraham Gombiner (1637–83) wrote *Magen Avraham*, a commentary to *Oraḥ Ḥayyim*. The most influential supercommentary, *Pri Megadim*, by Rabbi Yosef ben Meir Teomim (1727–92), was divided into three separate commentaries that focused on the *Taz*, the *Shakh*, and the *Magen Avraham*. The pre-eminence of the *Shulḥan Arukh* is amply attested in the responsa literature and communal records. The community of Bodin, for example, required its rabbis to rule in accordance with *Tur, Beit Yosef, Shulḥan Arukh, Mappah*, and subsequent commentaries, and not according to any other *posek*.[42] In an era of social, political, and intellectual turmoil, the *Shulḥan Arukh* standardized ritual practice in most of the Jewish world and thus became a force of stability and tradition.

Karo's monumental code, together with Isserles's glosses, embodied many of the cultural innovations spearheaded by printing, including the systematization of legal traditions and the popularization of elite culture. The force of customary law, especially, was a matter of substantial debate. It highlighted tensions surrounding local and regional identities, the authority of extra-talmudic traditions, and the question of continuity between the medieval and modern eras. As in European society at large, tensions between local custom and universal law intensified in the sixteenth century. Aiming to level down local and regional identities, the massive efforts of Karo and Isserles, as noted above, met spirited resistance among those seeking to reinforce local custom.[43] Even before the publication of the *Shulḥan Arukh*, customaries of leading medieval rabbis were among the first books printed in the early sixteenth century. These

[42] The three parts of the *Pri Megadim* were *Mishbetzot Zahav, Siftei Da'at*, and *Eshel Avraham*. On the esteem in which the *Shulḥan Arukh* was held, see Gershon Oulif, *Resp. Avodat ha-Gershuni* (Frankfurt, 1699), no. 48, and the ruling of the Bodin community, in *Resp. Sha'ar Ephraim*, no. 113, as cited in Tchernowitz, *Toldot ha-poseqim*, III, 156–7. In a more muted assertion of support, R. Ya'ir Ḥayyim Bacharach ruled that it was forbidden to dispute the decision of the *Shulḥan Arukh* when there were no dissenting opinions. Wherever Isserles cited conflicting opinions and concurred with them, these were to be viewed as binding "in these lands"; when Isserles cited "there are those who say" but did not decide conclusively, then the rulings of *Sefer Me'irat Einayim* and *Shakh* were considered determinative. See Bacharach, *Resp. Ḥavvot Ya'ir*, no. 165.

[43] For an illustration of how Jewish codification can be understood in light of general developments in Europe, see Joseph Davis, "The Reception of the *Shulḥan Arukh* and the Formation of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity," *AJS Review* 26, 2 (2002), 252–3. For attention to broader trends, see Donald R. Kelley, "'Second Nature': The Idea of Custom in European Law, Society, and Culture," in Anthony Grafton and Ann Blair, eds., *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia, 1990), 131–72.

included *Sefer ha-Rokeach, Sefer RaBaN* (Rabbi Eliezer b. Nathan), and compendia produced by, or in the name of, Rabbi Me'ir of Rothenberg, Rabbi Israel Isserlein, Rabbi Jacob Moellin, Rabbi Isaac Tyrnau, and Rabbi Abraham Klausner, among others. In late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Worms and Frankfurt, several new initiatives were undertaken to compile local and regional customs relating to synagogue worship and rituals observed in the home. The renewed emphasis on custom was dedicated both to the preservation of local traditions and to the restoration of those rituals that were either lost or forgotten during the preceding centuries.[44] In these respects, the early modern *Minhagbücher* were consistent with the medieval tradition that elevated custom to the virtual equivalent of law.[45] As in the Middle Ages, Ashkenazic Jews proudly viewed their customs as a badge of honor and a mark of distinction. The new compendia endorsed the strict observance of liturgical rites and melodies established by earlier generations.[46]

Powerful geographical, cultural, and political forces contributed to a more acutely complicated relationship between custom and law in the early modern period. First, the aggregate effect of expulsions, migrations, and the difficulties of adjustment to new conditions was interpreted by some halakhic authorities as evidence of the historical discontinuity that arguably separated the medieval and early modern eras. Time-honored patterns of religious culture were believed to have ruptured, resulting in unending inconsistencies between traditions that were recorded in medieval texts and contemporary practices. Anxiety concerning the challenges of displacement and loss in some instances sparked new efforts to preserve ritual practices. Second, this trend was complicated further by the more pronounced cultural and political chasm separating eastern and western European Jewries. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, German Jewry and Polish Jewry competed for the position of standard-bearer of the Ashkenazic tradition. Loyalty to the classical-medieval

[44] *Minhagot Wormaiza* (Jerusalem, 1987) was compiled by Juda Loewe Kirchheim and was completed between 1615 and 1632; Juspa Shamash, *Minhagim de Kehilat Kodesh Wormaiza*, ed. Benjamin S. Hamburger, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1988–92), with introduction by Eric Zimmer; Joseph Juspa Hahn, *Yosif Ometz* (Frankfurt am Main, 1723); Joseph Juspa Kosman, *Sefer Noheg ka-Tzon Yosef* (Hanau, 1718).

[45] See Avraham Grossman, *Ḥakhmei Ashkenaz ha-Rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1988); Grossman, *Ḥakhmei Tsarfat ha-Rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1995); Daniel Sperber, *Minhagei Yisrael: Mekorot ve-Toldot*, 8 vols. (Jerusalem, 1989–2007); Israel Ta-Shema, *Minhag Ashkenaz ha-Kadmon* (Jerusalem, 1999); and Eric Zimmer, '*Olam ke-Minhago Noheg: peraqim be-Toldot ha-Minhagim, hilkhotehem, ve-Gilguleihem* (Jerusalem, 1996).

[46] For an example of the restorative impulse, see Kirchheim, *Minhagot Wormaiza*, 63, gloss 8; also see 64, gloss 8.

Ashkenazic tradition manifested itself in the strenuous efforts of German rabbis to defend their customs from the burgeoning influence of Polish Jewry. When it was not possible to reconcile local custom with the practice as recorded historically, compilers of Ashkenazic *Minhagbücher* displayed a tendency to endorse the former.[47] Third, printing revitalized diverse traditions that would have otherwise remained inaccessible and unknown.[48] Like prayer books, customs books contributed to the consolidation of religious practice and to the entrenchment of local identity. Fourth, the new customary literature combined elements of rabbinic and popular culture. The popular character of these compilations is evident in their frequent recourse to midrashic imagery, parables, and rabbinic folklore in order to elucidate obscure rituals, as well as terms and phrases in the liturgy that were likely to have been unintelligible to most worshippers.[49]

In the late seventeenth century, a newly critical perspective on *minhagim* came to the fore, doubtless in response to the popularizing trend described above. In the view of Rabbi Ya'ir Ḥayyim Bacharach, whose halakhic writings were among the most assertive in this regard, the authority of customs depended on the integrity of the textual traditions on which they were based. Though staunchly protective of *minhagim* as normative practices, he demanded that they conform to accepted strictures of Halakhah.[50] Accordingly, he frowned on *minhagim* that had evolved independently of the halakhic system and had in some instances even developed in opposition to it. Bacharach objected fiercely to those instances where Rabbi Moses Isserles privileged *minhag* over Halakhah, as in the custom of discouraging menstruant women from entering the synagogue, pronouncing the name of God, or touching a Torah scroll, because the custom so

[47] Kirchheim, *Minhagot Wormaiza*, 221 and gloss 8. On the growing tension between Ashkenazic and Polish rites, see Kirchheim's discussion of the phrase *El Melekh Ne'eman* in *Minhagot Wormaiza*, 25, glosses 14–15; 240. The pressure to adopt the Polish practice was undoubtedly an echo of increasing kabbalistic influence. For Joseph Nördlingen's solution, cf. *Yosif Omets*, nos. 7 and 16–17.

[48] The following are a few of the compendia of customs that became accessible during the era of printing: the Worms Maḥzor of 1272; the *siddur* of Judah ben Samuel he-Hasid of Regensburg (Tiengen, 1560); and *Sefer ha-Maharil* (Sabbioneta, 1556).

[49] See Jay R. Berkovitz, "Jewish Law and Ritual in Early Modern Germany," in Dean P. Bell and Stephen G. Burnett, eds., *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Boston, 2006), 499–502.

[50] See, for example, the concerns that Bacharach expressed in relation to changes in synagogue protocol, in *Resp. Ḥavvot Ya'ir*, no. 222. For illustrations of his critical perspective, see Jay R. Berkovitz, "Crisis and Authority in Early Modern Ashkenaz," *Jewish History* 26 (2012), 185–8.

blatantly contradicted established halakhic sources.[51] He also took aim at customs that were products of popular culture and were imbued with superstitious beliefs and "foolish piety."[52] The source of this distress was evidently the perceived gap between ritual and text that widened in the throes of unceasing disagreement concerning the reliability of textual traditions relating to ritual practice and liturgy.[53]

Serious engagement with Kabbalah as a source of ritual and law is first apparent in the sixteenth century, only after the Zohar had attained a quasi-canonical status. The storm surrounding the initial printing of the Zohar in 1560 in Mantua reveals deeply divided attitudes toward Kabbalah at the dawn of the early modern era.[54] Even after the Zohar was printed, however, the construction of religious culture in Ashkenaz continued to reflect the steady influence of German Pietism (*Hasidut Ashkenaz*).[55] Rabbi David ben Isaac of Fulda, author of a kabbalistic opus, *Migdal David* (1595), displayed a strong affinity for the mysticism of Hasidei Ashkenaz, as is evident in his references to *Sefer Razim*, numerous prayers and mystical incantations composed by Rabbi Judah he-Hasid of Regensburg, and the latter's commentary to *Sefer Yetzirah*. But the work

[51] See Isserles, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 88, and Bacharach, *Mekor Ḥayyim* (Jerusalem, 1982), *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 88.

[52] Bacharach characterized the custom, at the Passover seder, of a person pretending to be Elijah coming through the door of the house, as "depraved and silly." See Bacharach, *Mekor Ḥayyim*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 480. Cf. Hahn, *Yosif Ometz*, no. 788. Also see Jay R. Berkovitz, "Authority and Innovation at the Threshold of Modernity: The *Me'orei Or* of Rabbi Aaron Worms of Metz," in Gerald Blidstein, Ezra Fleischer, Carmi Horowitz, and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky* (Jerusalem, 2001), 271–81.

[53] See Mordecai Margaliot, *Sefer ha-Razim* (Jerusalem, 1966), and Joseph Dan, *Torat ha-Sod shel Hasidei Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem, 1968).

[54] See Jacob Katz, "Post-Zoharic Relations between Halakhah and Kabbalah," in *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem, 1998), 36. The Zohar was published in two different editions, in Mantua in 1560. See Boaz Huss, "Sefer ha-Zohar as a Canonical, Sacred, and Holy Text: Changing Perspectives of the Book of Splendor between the Thirteenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 7 (1998), 257–307.

[55] In *'Olam ke-Minhago Noheg*, 217–95, Zimmer argued for the abiding influence of Hasidei Ashkenaz in late medieval and early modern Ashkenaz, but Haym Soloveitchik has argued that the evidence assembled by Zimmer is unconvincing. See his "Piety, Pietism and German Pietism: *Sefer Hasidism* and the Influence of Hasidei Ashkenaz," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 92 (2002), 483–8. Drawing on Polish rabbinic writings, Edward Fram has amassed proof of the continued influence of Hasidei Ashkenaz in the early modern era, but he concluded that *Sefer Hasidim* was selectively cited and should not be presumed to have had a determinative impact. See Edward Fram, "German Pietism and Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Polish Rabbinic Culture," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006), 50–9.

contained no direct citations of the Zohar, only a single reference to Moses Cordovero, and no mention at all of Lurianic Kabbalah. Similarly, *Minhagot Wormaiza*, which was produced by Juda Leib Kirchheim, grounded the rituals of his community and general ethical and spiritual teachings in the classic texts of rabbinic Judaism and in traditions attributed to Hasidei Ashkenaz. The work remained free of the more speculative kabbalistic influences common elsewhere, even well after the emergence of Lurianic Kabbalah. Lurianic Kabbalah was presumably unknown or of little interest in Germany until after the turn of the seventeenth century.[56] In *Yosif Ometz*, which was compiled by Joseph Juspa Hahn of Nördlingen in 1630, the imprint of Cordoveran and Lurianic Kabbalah is in greater evidence, though liturgical customs were also established in accordance with the view of *Sefer Rokeach*.[57] This tendency no doubt advanced the popular character of the customary literature, which was an expressed objective of the author.[58] By the mid seventeenth century, the new mystical pietism found literary expression in *Shenei Luḥot ha-Berit* by Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz of Frankfurt am Main. The works of Hahn and Horowitz represent what may be viewed as an intermediate stage in the integration of pre-Lurianic and Lurianic mystical traditions.[59]

Further to the east, the early seventeenth century witnessed a greater tendency to rely on the Zohar as a steady source of ritual practice. Yissachar Ber of Kremenets, author of *Yesh Sakhar*, was among the first to cite customs routinely from the Zohar,[60] and Benjamin Slonik (*c.* 1550 – *c.* 1619) referred to the Zohar to a greater extent in his responsa than any of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. The spread of Lurianic Kabbalah, however, was much more deliberate. By viewing the performance of Jewish rituals as crucial for the cosmic order, for the restoration of the Godhead, and for the redemption of the world, Lurianic theology inspired the creation of numerous rituals that dramatized its theurgic underpinnings. But careful attention to the printing history of Lurianic

[56] Juda Leib Kirchheim, *Minhagot Wormaiza*, 43, gloss 4. Kirchheim here based himself on Moshe Matt, *Resp. Mateh Moshe* (Krakow, 1591), no. 220. On Matt's heavy reliance on *Sefer Hasidim*, see Fram, "German Pietism," 56. Also see *Minhagot Wormaiza*, 57, gloss 22.

[57] *Yosif Ometz* (Frankfurt, 1723), nos. 14, 25, 29, 75, 82, 109, 179, 852.

[58] In his introduction he wrote that his intended audience was the masses, "even if they did not know the references."

[59] Zimmer, *Fiery Embers of the Scholars*, 32–3; Zimmer, "R. David b. Isaac of Fulda: The Trials and Tribulations of a Sixteenth Century German Rabbi," *Jewish Social Studies* 45 (1983), 221–3. Cf. Elliot R. Wolfson, "The Influence of the Ari on the Shelah" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10 (1992), 423–48.

[60] Yissachar Ber, *Yesh Sakhar* (Prague, 1609).

books, and of conduct literature (*regimen vitae*) as well, has eroded Gershom Scholem's claim that the wave of ascetic piety, new rituals, and mystical meditations that accompanied the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria prepared the way for the popular embrace of the pseudo-messiah Sabbatai Zevi in 1666.[61] Far from signaling a breakdown of rabbinic authority, the Kabbalah, having permeated normative rabbinic culture before the breakdown of traditional society, evinced a certain resemblance to patterns of classical rabbinic thought. Increasingly compliant attitudes toward the Kabbalah among leading members of the rabbinic establishment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offer an impressive example of cultural transformation.[62] Abraham Gombiner's *Magen Avraham* commentary to *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* regularly cited the literature of Lurianic Kabbalah and is credited with introducing mystical traditions to the mainstream of halakhic discourse. This was consistent with a growing consensus, first stated in the name of Rabbi David ben Zimra (d. 1573), that, when the Zohar's ritual prescriptions did not explicitly contradict halakhic norms, the view of the Zohar was to be considered binding.[63] The authority of the Zohar and the Kabbalah nonetheless remained contested through most of the seventeenth century, as is evident from the misgivings expressed by numerous halakhic authorities, including Rabbi Solomon Luria, Rabbi Joel Sirkes, Rabbi David ha-Levi, Rabbi Shabbetai Cohen, and Rabbi Yomtov Lipmann Heller.[64]

By the late seventeenth century, however, Kabbalah had emerged as a major influence in many areas of ritual life. Rabbi Ya'ir Ḥayyim Bacharach, one of the first *posekim* to engage kabbalistic literature in a sustained manner, cited zoharic and kabbalistic sources time after time in his

[61] See Gries, *The Book*, 69–75; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, 1988), 264–71; and Avriel Bar Levav, "Ritualisation of Life and Death in the Early Modern Period," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 47 (2002), 69–82.

[62] R. Joel Sirkes, for one, viewed Kabbalah as an extension of traditional rabbinic works. In *Resp. Bayit Ḥadash* (Frankfurt, 1697), no. 5, he ruled that one who rejects Kabbalah deserves excommunication. Cf. Horowitz, *Shenei Luḥot ha-Brit*, 1:42b–43a, where his commentary to Maimonides's Thirteen Principles was informed by kabbalistic teachings.

[63] See Karo, *Beit Yosef*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 120 and 141, and the discussion in Katz, "Post-Zoharic Relations between Halakhah and Kabbalah," 53–4.

[64] Even those who adamantly rejected the halakhic authority of the Zohar or other kabbalistic sources liberally drew upon its concepts, symbols, and ideas. See Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity*, 356–65, and Sharon Flatto, *The Kabbalistic Culture of Eighteenth-Century Prague: Ezekiel Landau and his Contemporaries* (Oxford, 2010). On R. Leon Modena's thoroughgoing critique of the Zohar and his dismissal of the cult of personality that had formed around Isaac Luria, see Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Princeton, 2011).

commentary on the *Shulḥan Arukh*, even in those instances when they appeared to contradict the talmudic tradition. Although he conceded that the kabbalistic tradition was often unpersuasive, he refused to dismiss its authority out of hand, certainly not before summoning textual evidence to substantiate his position.[65] The propensity to cite kabbalistic sources corresponded in large measure to the public attention and ease of access this literature had gained by the eighteenth century. Functionally, recourse to Kabbalah permitted halakhic authorities to flesh out ritual details where talmudic sources were either weak or silent, as the case of ritual hand washing illustrates. Talmudic discussions provided scant detail concerning the precise performance of the hand washing ritual, whereas kabbalistic sources provided extensive guidelines. The adoption of the kabbalistic ritual is a case of "ritualization," which implied an awareness of gaps in the halakhic system that could not be bridged without resorting to external sources.[66] Kabbalah was also viewed as an authoritative source capable of endowing popular celebrations with an air of sacrality that was missing from the performance of certain rituals, as in the case of the *veglia* (the "eve of circumcision") that was observed as a night of boisterous amusement. Communal authorities and religious leaders shared a common interest in imposing limits on such celebrations; rabbis referred to the authority of the Zohar and Kabbalah in order to introduce pious recitations and study.[67]

Certain novel trends in talmudic learning suggest that already in the sixteenth century the Talmud had begun to arouse intellectual curiosity independent of any bearing on practical Halakhah. From the advent of printing, there was a dramatic increase in the composition of talmudic commentaries and new interest in the Jerusalem Talmud as well. *Novellae*, as these commentaries were known, endeavored to reconcile inconsistencies in talmudic and post-talmudic rabbinic literature. One type, known as

[65] See, for example, Bacharach's discussion of the Priestly Benediction performed by an unmarried *kohen*, in *Mekor Ḥayyim*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 128:44. It should be noted that in his *Darkhei Moshe*, Isserles cited the Zohar occasionally, as in Tur, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 89:1.

[66] For a discussion of a later eighteenth-century *posek* who considered Kabbalah carefully in his analysis of talmudic and halakhic sources, see Berkovitz, "Authority and Innovation at the Threshold of Modernity," 249–85. On Bacharach's attitude to Kabbalah as an antidote to the spiritual malaise of his day, see Jay R. Berkovitz, "The Conception of Minhag in the Halakhic System of R. Ya'ir Ḥayyim Bacharach," in Gershon Bacon, Daniel Sperber, and Aharon Gaimani, eds., *Studies on the History of the Jews of Ashkenaz: Eric Zimmer Jubilee Volume* (Ramat Gan, 2008) [Hebrew], 29–56, and Isadore Twersky, "Law and Spirituality in the Seventeenth Century: A Case Study in R. Yair Ḥayyim Bacharach," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 447–67.

[67] Elliott Horowitz, "The Eve of Circumcision: A Chapter in the History of Jewish Nightlife," *Journal of Social History* 23 (1989), 45–69.

pilpul, revolutionized Talmud study through its emphasis on abstract conceptual analysis. Entirely divorced from practical application, *pilpul* developed into a theoretical intellectual exercise and for this reason was criticized in many quarters. The Maharal of Prague argued for greater attention to the study of Halakhah, and Rabbi Samuel Eliezer Edels (1555–1631) stressed the importance of the commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot for grasping the plain meaning of talmudic passages. A turning point in the evolution of attitudes toward the talmudic text and *pilpul* was the appearance of *Penei Yehoshua* by Rabbi Joshua Falk in 1739. Following the lead of Israel Ta-Shema, Elchanan Reiner has shown how Falk's focus on syntax and literary structure exemplified a rapidly expanding new genre of talmudic exegesis. In sharp contrast to Falk's predecessors, *Penei Yehoshua* rejected the rigidity of *pilpul* in favor of greater latitude toward the talmudic text. Even with the success of the new genre, and despite growing criticism from the Gaon of Vilna, Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman (1720–97), and others, *pilpul* continued as a major form of Talmud study in the nineteenth century.[68]

Confronted by radically new social, economic, and political conditions, rabbinic leaders were challenged to reconcile two competing values: economic integration and the preservation of social and religious separation. In its various stages of development, Jewish law was an amalgam of talmudic and halakhic exegesis, custom (*minhag*), and communal legislation (*takkanot* and *gezerot*), and its authority was established as a matter of

[68] See Haym Soloveitchik, "Printing and the History of Halakha: A Case Study" [Hebrew], *Bar Ilan* 30–1 (2006), 319–22; Elon, *Jewish Law*, III, 1128, 1138–48, 1383; and Israel Ta-Shema, *Talmudic Commentary in Europe and North Africa: Literary History, Part One: 1000–1200* (Jerusalem, 1999), 16–25. On the increase in talmudic commentaries, especially in the eighteenth century, see Gries, *The Book*, 39. On the formulaic structure of *pilpul*, see Ḥaim Z. Dimitrovsky, "The Method of Pilpul," in *Salo W. Baron Jubilee Volume*, vol. III (Jerusalem, 1975) [Hebrew], 111–81; and on the continued viability of *pilpul*, particularly in the *novellae* of R. Ezekiel Landau, see 176–81. On the historical and institutional development of *pilpul*, see Mordechai Breuer, "The Rise of Pilpul and Ḥilukim in the Yeshivot of Germany," in Azriel Hildesheimer and Kalman Kahane, eds., *Rabbi Jacob Jehiel Weinberg Memorial Volume* (Jerusalem, 1970) [Hebrew], 241–55; and Reiner, "Transformations in the Polish and Ashkenazi Yeshivot." On eighteenth-century trends in talmudic study, see Israel Ta-Shema, "The Gra and the Author of the Sha'agat Aryeh, and the Penei Yehoshua and Tzion le-Nefesh Ḥayah" [Hebrew], *Sidra* 15 (1999), 181–191; and Elchanan Reiner, "Beyond the Realm of the Haskalah: Changing Learning Patterns in Jewish Traditional Society," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007), 123–33. On the scholarly methods of the Gaon of Vilna, including his curricular stratagem for studying the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Talmudim, as well as his insistence on establishing correct texts, see Jay M. Harris, *How Do We Know This? Midrash and the Fragmentation of Modern Judaism* (Albany, 1995), 235–40.

broad consensus in private and public affairs. Adaptability to changing conditions has been perhaps the most salient characteristic of Jewish law over the course of its history. With a range of hermeneutical devices at their disposal, medieval and early modern rabbinic authorities were able to interpret the law in light of social and economic exigencies. The innovative efforts of Rabbi Jacob Tam to overcome talmudic obstacles to commercial transactions in the twelfth century aptly illustrate what would become a more common phenomenon in the early modern era.[69] Indeed, the elasticity of Jewish law was manifested in vast areas ranging from family and inheritance to commercial transactions. Halakhic authorities recognized the need to adapt the law to changing conditions so that the legal system would remain attuned to contemporary needs and realities. But they were also constrained by the inherently conservative character of a system that discouraged modifications to scriptural or talmudic law, even when it was no longer clear that the ancient legislation was still warranted as it once was. Tensions between tradition and innovation persisted despite the availability of exegetical methods capable of expanding or limiting the contemporary application of key talmudic or halakhic texts.

These stresses and strains were the central concern of Jacob Katz's pioneering study *Tradition and Crisis*, first published in 1958. Katz's thesis concerning the beginnings of modernity has been subjected to severe criticism in the last quarter-century, but neither the first part of his work, which focused on the development of communal legislation and institutions in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, nor the rich array of rabbinic sources on which he based his analysis, have received the attention they deserve. Of the areas of adaptation to new conditions discussed by Katz and others, two stand out most prominently: accommodation to economic change and redefining the relationship to non-Jewish society.[70]

The principal analytical challenge facing early modern *posekim* was to determine whether the details of talmudic law were still in force in relation to the demands of contemporary society. When the issues they encountered were grounded in conditions that were distinctly different from those treated in talmudic and medieval sources, *posekim* were able to justify setting the latter aside; in more extreme cases, the most ambitious jurists among them devised new legal strategies to overcome the chasm separating present and past. The most immediate challenges were posed by the

[69] See Shmuel Shilo, "Encouragement of Commerce and Economy in the Pesikah of Rabbenu Tam" [Hebrew], *Sinai* 100 (1987), 882–96.

[70] Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. from the Hebrew with an afterword by Bernard D. Cooperman (New York, 1993).

growing involvement of Jews in long-distance trade and the acquisition of licenses entitling individuals to monopolies in certain industries, such as liquor, horses, and tax farming. Jewish participation in the economic life of central and eastern Europe and of the Ottoman Empire, especially in textiles, winemaking, tax farming, banking and international commerce, and military purveyance, raised unending halakhic dilemmas that demanded the intervention of rabbinic authorities. Prior to the late seventeenth century, *posekim* favored protectionism and regulation, as did the communal leadership in most localities; they regularly stood behind merchants and financiers who had exclusive commercial or contracting agreements. Rulings issued by Rabbi Samuel de Medina of Salonika (1506–89), insofar as they reveal an intensely positive orientation to commerce and competition, were noticeably different from the prevailing patterns of *pesaq* in early modern Ashkenaz. In response to a question concerning the competition posed by foreign merchants, for example, de Medina argued that the talmudic distinction between local and foreign merchants was no longer pertinent in a free-market economy, particularly in an era when political conditions had changed so dramatically.[71] But his contention that there was no legal basis for prohibiting competition was absent from most communal ordinances adopted in central and eastern Europe. Only in the late seventeenth century, with the publication of a landmark responsum by Rabbi Ya'ir Ḥayyim Bacharach, did the halakhic tide turn decisively in support of free trade.[72]

In an age dominated by expanding trading networks, the development of suitable instruments of credit came to be viewed as absolutely essential, as even local commerce depended on immediate access to credit. Talmudic law prohibited lending money for interest, but a legal device conceived in the late sixteenth century by R. Joshua Falk redefined what had been viewed previously as "interest" as actually a form of profit-sharing in a temporary business "partnership."[73] Falk's initiative was formally approved by the rabbinical assembly of the Council of the Four Lands in 1607. Discussion of bearer notes, known as *membrany* in Polish, offers an additional illustration of legal adaptation in the economic realm.

[71] Samuel de Medina, *Resp. Maharshdam* (Jerusalem, 2010), *Ḥoshen Mishpat* 407, discussed in Sinai Deutsch, "Business Competition and Ethics: Predatory Pricing in Jewish Law," *Diné Israel* 17 (1993–4), 28–9. Also see Isserles, *Ḥoshen Mishpat* 156:7, but cf. *Resp. Rema*, no. 10.

[72] See *Resp. Maharshal* (Jerusalem, 1992), nos. 36 and 89; Benjamin Slonik, *Resp. Massat Binyamin* (Krakow, 1632), no. 27; Joel Sirkes, *Resp. Bayit Ḥadash*, no. 60; Bacharach, *Resp. Ḥavvot Ya'ir*, no. 42. See the detailed discussion in Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 106–28.

[73] Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, 55–8.

Commercial practice established that a *membrana* could be presented for payment even after it was transferred from person to person, without endorsement and without the agreement of the original lender. While *membrany* offered clear advantages to merchants, their status was problematic in the view of many *posekim* because they failed to meet certain procedural requirements demanded by talmudic law. Indebtedness, according to the formal Halakhah, applied to a specific individual and could not be transferred. But *posekim* were willing to sanction the use of *membrany* as an acceptable means of collecting funds as long as communal leaders had so determined its suitability. Their reasoning was based on several considerations, including allowances made for the benefit of the marketplace (*takkanat ha-shuq*) and the legal principle of *dina d'malkhuta dina* ("the law of the kingdom is the law"). As Edward Fram has shown, discussion among *posekim* centered on the status of custom in commercial transactions, free enterprise vs. commercial regulation, the inviolability of Halakhah, and commercial transactions between Jews and gentiles. In the end, rabbis recognized the desirability of reconciling the Halakhah with communal ordinances and communal needs.[74]

The need to (re)define the relationship of Jews to European society became especially challenging in the last decades of the seventeenth century as the transition to capital investment, international commerce, manufacturing, and free enterprise advanced. These developments, which went hand in hand with urban growth, encouraged increased interaction between Jews and non-Jews, mainly in commercial dealings. The proliferation of questionable business practices was increasingly condemned in the halakhic literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as "ugly deeds" on their own account, and not simply for the dangers they posed to the Jewish public (*ḥillul Hashem*). The legal writings of Rabbi Moses Rivkes of seventeenth-century Lithuania stand out with respect to their heightened concern with ethical justice in dealings with non-Jews. In *Be'er ha-Golah*, his commentary on *Ḥoshen Mishpat*, Rivkes echoed Maimonides's warning that the mistreatment of gentiles was inconsistent with character refinement, and he cited traditions strongly commending virtuous behavior toward idolaters, such as the return of lost property, "in order to sanctify the Name and glorify Israel, so that they will know that they [the Jews] are men of faith." His comments also affirmed that the Halakhah had intended to exclude only idolaters from the category of those deserving ethical treatment, "but not the peoples under whose protection we are exiled." More concrete evidence of a positive orientation toward contemporary gentiles and their legal institutions can be found in several responsa authored by Rabbi

[74] For details, see Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 116–43. See Sirkes, *Bayit Ḥadash, Ḥoshen Mishpat* 48, and Joshua Falk, *Sefer Me'irat Einayim* (Prague, 1616), *Ḥoshen Mishpat* 54:5.

Bacharach. In opposition to most other *posekim* who were reluctant to deliver Jewish criminals to general courts out of concern for the injustices that Jewish defendants were likely to face there, Bacharach concurred with an earlier ruling of Rabbi Joel Sirkes permitting extradition to gentile authorities. He distinguished sharply between the anti-Jewish prejudices rampant among the masses and the enlightened views of official governing bodies that were, in his estimation, able to conduct an honest investigation and reach a just verdict.[75]

Concerning interaction with the members of general society, however, the continued relevance of talmudic restrictions remained at issue. When the question was primarily economic, halakhic rulings tended to favor the lenient view, which enabled Jews to earn their livelihood even when a minor legal infraction might be involved. Such was the trend in response to questions concerning commerce in gentile wine, especially in regions of Italy and Moravia where wine trade was a mainstay of the economy. Similarly, the phenomenon of women working as peddlers raised questions about the propriety of being alone with a male in a gentile home. This, too, was permitted by Bacharach on the basis of economic necessity alone.[76] But most *posekim* in the seventeenth century were reluctant to rely on talmudic dispensations concerning interaction with gentiles, based on "the avoidance of enmity" and "pursuing the ways of peace." Their concern was that this could well be taken as a positive justification for promoting social intermingling.[77] Efforts by halakhic authorities to discourage social interaction that could result from eating together and dressing alike resembled the reliance by Catholic authorities on canon law to promote separation. It appears that in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, early modern religious leaders – Jewish and Christian – defined the boundaries separating adherents of the two faiths more strictly than before. The contrast between "textually constructed boundaries," on the one hand, and indications of social interaction between Jews and Poles found in rabbinic responsa and Christian court records, on the other, is an instructive reminder of the limited value of prescriptive codes for historians.[78]

[75] See Bacharach, *Resp. Ḥavvot Ya'ir*, nos. 139 and 146, and Sirkes, *Resp. Bayit Ḥadash*, nos. 43 and 44. Also see the discussion in Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish–Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York, 1961), 164–8; Elijah J. Shochet, *A Responsum of Surrender* (Los Angeles, 1973); and Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages*, 127–9.

[76] See Bacharach, *Resp. Ḥavvot Ya'ir*, nos. 66 and 73.

[77] See, for example, Ha-Levi, *Turei Zahav*, Yoreh De'ah 152.1.

[78] On the resemblance between Jewish law and canon law, and on the permeability of boundaries, see Magda Teter, "'There Should Be No Love Between Us and Them': Social Life and the Bounds of Jewish and Canon Law in Early Modern Poland," *Polin* 22 (2010), 249–70. Also see Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 29–32.

The process of conforming to systems of justice in the modern state constituted another significant form of attachment to the larger society, though this trend varied considerably by region. Recent research on the rabbinic court of Metz in the 1770s and 1780s reveals remarkable familiarity with French judicial procedures, though it appears that this was not so in rabbinic courts in other localities such as Frankfurt. As a comparison with the Frankfurt rabbinic court diary suggests, the urgency to resolve the dissonance between the Jewish and general legal systems was more pronounced in Metz than elsewhere. Inheritance cases were often worked out cooperatively by rabbinic judges and French lawyers, while judicial practices and technical terminology bearing the imprint of the French legal system all found their way into the deliberations of the Metz *bet din*. The collaborative relationship between the Metz *bet din* and the French civil court system resulted from the growing infrastructural power of the state, the developing consensus that the state ought to rule its citizens directly, and the increasing sense that a uniform legal code would promote the inclusion of the Jews in civil society. Within this context, Metz Jews encountered the challenges of legal pluralism on a daily basis. But more than simply adapting to the prevailing system of French law, rabbinic judges strongly acknowledged the interdependence of cases brought to the Jewish tribunal and before the French civil court system. Decades before the Jewish population of France was admitted to citizenship, the realm of law generated rules of engagement between the Jewish minority in Metz and the surrounding society. The records of the Metz rabbinic court challenge the very idea of an insular Jewish legal system.[79]

Overall, the era of Jewish emancipation, and the extensive social and political changes it wrought, posed unprecedented challenges for *posekim*. Some challenges were the product of heightened expectations concerning industrialization. Rabbi Ezekiel Landau (1713–93), head of the rabbinic court of Prague, displayed originality in his reading of talmudic sources in order to permit a Jewish-owned tobacco factory, which employed non-Jewish workers, to remain open on the Sabbath. This lenient ruling, which showed concern for the livelihood of several hundred families, made use of talmudic distinctions regarding tenant farming and applied them to the case before him. Landau was excoriated by Rabbi Jacob Emden of Altona for disregarding the fact that the factory was owned by a Jew and that the operation of the factory on the Sabbath would therefore be considered a profanation of the Divine Name.[80] Some decades later, Rabbi Moses Sofer

[79] See Berkovitz, *Protocols of Justice*, and Fram, *A Window on Their World*.

[80] Ezekiel Landau, *Resp. Noda bi-Yehudah* (Prague, 1811), II, nos. 29 and 37; and Jacob Emden, *Resp. She'elat Yaavetz*, no. 60. See Sinclair, "Halakhic Methodology in the Post-Emancipation Period."

of Pressburg denounced the Landau decision for its leniency concerning certain Sabbath restrictions that were rabbinically ordained (*d'rabbanan*). Sofer was of the opinion that the times demanded an upgrading of rabbinic prohibitions to the level of biblical proscriptions (*d'oraita*). For reasons that related to the vast changes that had become pervasive within modern Jewish society, he favored blurring the boundary between the two levels.[81] As to political challenges, perhaps none illustrates this better than the demanding questions placed before the Napoleonic Sanhedrin in Paris in 1806–7. Rabbi Aaron Worms (1754–1836) of Metz, who was the foremost halakhic authority at the assembly alongside its president, Rabbi David Sintzheim, crafted the halakhic arguments that formed the basis for the Sanhedrin's responses concerning Jewish–gentile relations, patriotic loyalty, and moneylending.[82] These would become paradigms for modern Jews.

In the course of three centuries, rabbinic culture and Jewish law showed signs of a departure from the dominant patterns that prevailed in the late medieval period. But to appreciate the significance of this development requires additional clarification concerning evidence that, in the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, *posekim* may have been bolder than their counterparts in the late Middle Ages, especially in areas touching on commercial law and communal authority. The uncertain relationship between communal authority and Halakhah, coupled with the ascendancy of the laity, produced a conservative reaction that found expression in greater fidelity to talmudic law and a tendency to reinforce rabbinic authority among late medieval and some early modern *posekim*. Nevertheless, no such characterization of rabbinic culture can be entirely satisfactory, especially in light of halakhic advances pertaining to monetary flow that were made by a self-assured rabbinate in Poland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. All told, the vast dislocations resulting from expulsion and persecution left a lasting impression on rabbinic authority and culture. Communal legislation and the codification of Jewish law each, for quite different reasons, bore evidence of a retreat from the Talmud as the basis of legal norms. By expanding access to broader communities of readers, printing brought major changes to rabbinic culture, especially with respect to the popularization of religious customs and the new role of Kabbalah in shaping ritual practices. In this same era, wide-ranging hegemonic tensions between

[81] See Moses Sofer, *Resp. Ḥatam Sofer* (Pressburg, 1855), *Yoreh De'ah* no. 328. On the distinction between rabbinic and scriptural obligations, see Bacharach, *Resp. Ḥavvot Ya'ir*, no. 139; Aaron Worms, *Ken Tahor* (Metz, 1831), on Sanhedrin 46b; and the discussion in Daniel Sinclair, "Normative Transparency in Jewish Law: Maimonides, R. Moses Sofer, and R. Abraham Isaac Kook," *Jewish Law Annual* 19 (2011), 119–40.

[82] Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages*, ch. 5.

lay and clerical authority intensified, as did the growing dissonance between local and regional traditions. And in the realm of policy, the commercial revolution and the resettlement of Jews in central and western Europe challenged halakhic authorities to reconsider long-standing assumptions concerning non-Jews, the institutions of general society, and the mechanics of economic intercourse.[83]

The foregoing directions were clearly not free of paradox and contradiction. Appreciation for the proliferation of local customs developed alongside a heightened emphasis on legal uniformity and centralization; rabbinic encouragement of economic integration was counterbalanced by growing anxiety and uneasiness concerning the limits of social integration and acculturation. Dynamic change, in short, went hand in hand with conservatism, ambivalence, and even resistance among *posekim*. These developments, and the anxieties they evoked, account for the inescapably paradoxical trends in rabbinical culture of the early modern era.

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[83] See Israel Ta-Shema, *Creativity and Tradition: Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Scholarship, Literature and Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Haym Soloveitchik, "Pawnbroking: A Study in Ribbit and of the Halakah in Exile," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 38/39 (1970–1), 203–68; Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Halakhah and *Mezi'ut* (Realia) in Medieval Ashkenaz: Surveying the Parameters and Defining the Limits," *Jewish Law Annual* 14 (2003), 193–224; and Neil Hecht, ed., *An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law* (New York, 1996).

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CHAPTER 14

DISCIPLINE, DISSENT, AND COMMUNAL AUTHORITY IN THE WESTERN SEPHARDIC DIASPORA

YOSEF KAPLAN

THE PARADIGM OF CONFESSIONALIZATION

With the consolidation of new Jewish centers established in the Ottoman Empire, in eastern Europe, and later in western Europe, following the mass expulsions and migrations of the late Middle Ages, fundamental changes took place in Jewish society. Halakhic codification and its sweeping acceptance in the Jewish world, the emergence of consistent theological discourse, the formation of local Jewish custom, and the establishment of strong communities and regional governing institutions – all these contributed to the creation of uniformity within the Jewish diaspora and the intensification of Jewish distinctiveness vis-à-vis the non-Jewish world. These developments in Jewish society fit the paradigm of confessionalization, at least in its "soft" version, as formulated by Gregory Hanlon: "confessionalization can be regarded as the process whereby barricades were erected around each church group."[1] Indeed, in the early modern period we witness the effort on the part of various Jewish diasporas and communities to raise barriers around themselves and to sharpen their difference and religious uniqueness. This was a comprehensive effort, and, as in the process of confessionalization in broader European society, the one that took place in Jewish society was also not limited solely to the religious sphere.

The paradigm of confessionalization in Europe has given rise to wide-ranging literature and fascinating historiographical discussion. Ernst W. Zeeden saw confessionalization as a process of organizational, social, and cultural consolidation of the various churches, which created, each in its own way, their particular version of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Zeeden showed how, out of the maelstrom that was created at the beginning of the

[1] Gregory Hanlon, *Confession and Community in Seventeenth-Century France: Catholic and Protestant Coexistence in Aquitaine* (Philadelphia, 1993), 193.

Reformation, distinct and separate communities of Catholics, Calvinists, and Lutherans were formed, each with a decided orthodox approach and well-developed religious consciousness. He was the first to use the term "Konfessionsbildung," by means of which he sought to emphasize that, despite the differences among the various Christian denominations of Germany in the early modern period, the processes that led to the formation of a different and distinct identity were surprisingly similar.[2]

Heinz Schilling and other historians who followed in his wake expanded the phenomenon and transferred it from the narrow precincts of the church to the whole society, and from Germany to most of the European continent. According to Schilling, the processes of confessionalization are connected to those of state building in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The "confessionalization of society," in Schilling's opinion, led to a fundamental historical change not only with respect to religion but also in its psychological and cultural consequences, and the political and social transformations to which it contributed. The Catholic Church and Protestant churches consolidated their institutions and produced religious and cultural systems that were distinct in a variety of aspects: in doctrine, in ceremony, in spiritual content, and in the daily culture of the community of their believers. This was a comprehensive social phenomenon parallel to the emergence of the pre-modern state, to which it also contributed greatly with the assistance that it provided for the formation of the social discipline of its citizens. According to this approach, confessionalization added strength to political centralization, and for its part the pre-modern state employed religion to set its boundaries and to impose social discipline on its subjects.[3]

Unlike the Catholics, Calvinists, and Lutherans, the Jews were backed by no central political power of their own, which would have been able to employ the Jewish religion in order to determine its territorial boundaries or to strengthen the centralized regime or to tighten social control. But the part played by Jewish merchants and bankers in the growth of the capitalist economy and the involvement of quite a few of them in international trade gave rise to a social elite with great power, which sought to govern the Jewish communities in a centralized and often autocratic manner. Following the mass migrations that shook the Jewish world in the late

[2] Ernst Walter Zeeden, *Die Entstehung der Konfessionen. Grundlagen und Formen der Konfessionsbildung* (Munich, 1965); E. W. Zeeden, *Konfessionsbildung. Studien zu Reformation, Gegenreformation und katholischer Reform* (Stuttgart, 1985).

[3] Among his many writings on this topic, see mainly: Heinz Schilling, *Konfessionskonflikt und Staatsbildung: Eine Fallstudie über das Verhältniss von religiösem und sozialem Wandel in der Frühneuzeit am Beispiel der Grafschaft Lippe* (Gütersloh, 1981).

Middle Ages, this social elite became the main support for the emigrants, giving it further power and influence. The secular leadership assisted the religious leadership in setting the boundaries of the religious and ethnic culture of the new communities. They passed strict ordinances intended to preserve the independent identity of the communities, insisted on preserving old traditions, and fostered the creation of a wide-ranging confessional literature.

It appears that the struggle waged between Catholics and Protestants also made an impression on Jewish society. In an age when various factions of Christianity competed among themselves over which represented the true Christian Church, some rabbis and Jewish scholars sought to emphasize the chosenness of the Jewish people and its uniqueness. On the level of consciousness, in various communities, tendencies to emphasize the essential difference between "the people of Israel and the nations" grew in strength. Among the Ashkenazic Jews, Rabbi Judah Leib (known as the Maharal) of Prague gave expression to this in his reflections on Jewish separatism and its metaphysical meaning. Although he regarded the essential difference between Jews and gentiles not as a matter of faith and opinion but rather as a matter of nature and character, his conclusions had significant consequences in marking Jewish religious withdrawal from the Christian surroundings.[4] And on the other side, among Western Sephardic Jewry, Yshac Cardoso, a Marrano who became openly Jewish after leaving Spain and settling in Verona in the mid seventeenth century, gave expression to the separatist trend in an apologetic work in which he praised the "excelencias" of the Hebrew, in contrast to other nations. He proclaimed that the Jews were "una República aparte" ("a separate republic").[5] Although Cardoso spoke of the entire Jewish people, the model before his eyes was that of the new communities of the Western Sephardic Diaspora, each of which adopted similar patterns of a republican regime. Without doubt, the Western Sephardic Diaspora was influenced by the confessional struggle between Catholics and Protestants more than any other Jewish community. The Catholic education received by those who were born in the Iberian peninsula, and the exposure to Protestant culture experienced by the communities of this Diaspora that were located in Protestant cities, afforded them close knowledge of the arguments advanced by the parties to this struggle. Similarly, the Christian theological education of the intellectual elite of the western Sephardim, and their linguistic knowledge, granted them direct access to the current theological

[4] See Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish–Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York, 1961), 138–42.

[5] Yshac Cardoso, *Las excelencias de los Hebreos* (Amsterdam, 1679), 374.

disputes. However, what makes the communities of the western Sephardic Diaspora a unique case with respect to communal discipline and dissent is the fact that in no other Jewish diaspora did the challenges to rabbinical Judaism and traditional society either assume such a radical character or arouse such vehement and determined reactions on the part of both secular and religious authority.

THE MARRANOS AND THE WESTERN SEPHARDIC DIASPORA

Indeed, the Western Sephardic Diaspora was a special case in the general and complex process of confessionalization.[6] No other Jewish community in the early modern period underwent a religious and cultural metamorphosis like that of the Iberian Marranos, who became openly Jewish after generations of isolation, and no other Jewish diaspora at that time underwent a similar experience in setting the boundaries of its identity. The common ethnic consciousness was imprinted deeply in this diaspora, among both those who remained in Iberia or in other Catholic countries and assimilated into Christianity and those Crypto-Jews who remained there and sought to observe Jewish rituals in secret, and especially among those who left Iberia and became openly Jewish. All of them were aware of the existence of divided souls, New Christians who for various reasons had not decided about their religious affiliation.[7] Although the differences in religion were a source of tension and conflict, these did not overshadow the shared ethnic consciousness. Even among New Christians who identified totally with the Christian religion, awareness of their Jewish origin was not entirely effaced. At the same time, those who left the lands of the Inquisition were not always in a hurry to adhere openly to the Jewish religion, and among those who did so, quite a few were not deterred from returning to Iberia and living once again as Christians.[8]

[6] On the confessionalization of the Western Sephardic Diaspora, see Yosef Kaplan, "Between Christianity and Judaism in Early Modern Europe: The Confessionalization Process of the Western Sephardi Diaspora," in Lothar Gall and Dietmar Willoweit, eds., *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Course of History: Exchange and Conflicts* (Munich, 2011), 307–41.

[7] On the departure of Marranos from Spain and Portugal and the formation of the Western Sephardic Diaspora, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York, 1971), 1–50; Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York, 1992), 177–211.

[8] Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice 1550–1670* (Oxford, 1983), 201–312; David L. Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580–1700* (Philadelphia, 2004); Yosef Kaplan, "Amsterdam, the Forbidden

The Marranos who became openly Jewish in western Europe were not absorbed by existing Jewish communities, because in most of the places where they went, there had been no Jews before their arrival. These Marranos established their communities in parallel to the process of returning to Judaism. Since they had never tasted full Jewish life before then, sometimes the first Jewish community they knew was the one they had established. Not only was the cargo of Judaism that they brought with them scanty, they sometimes also found themselves torn between their tendencies toward Christianity and toward Judaism. Moreover, there was no lack of skeptics among them, deists and atheists who had abandoned Christianity without finding answers to their existential doubts in Judaism. Some of them became openly Jewish for reasons of ethnic and social solidarity or from family and economic considerations, but not necessarily because of a decision grounded in a solid religious outlook.

Despite the many difficulties that stood in their path, within a relatively short time they established strong communities, which managed to maintain a hierarchical regime with strict discipline and to accomplish a comprehensive confessionalization, which not only made its mark on their religious faith and behavior, but also shaped their culture and mentality.

It goes without saying that the process of confessionalization in the Western Sephardic Diaspora did not go hand in hand with the creation of a centralized state based on a bureaucratic administration and on obedience and loyalty to a prince standing at its head. Nevertheless, it was bound up with the building of new and strong communities which imposed a strict regime of social discipline.

THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE SEPHARDIC SOCIAL ELITE

Unlike European Christian society, among the Marranos who adopted Judaism there was no established religious authority, and naturally they also lacked political leadership. Who, then, headed the effort to carry out this radical upheaval in the community of the Marranos that had left Iberia and settled in western Europe? The process of confessionalization in the Western Sephardic Diaspora was headed by a secular leadership composed mainly of representatives of the extremely powerful economic elite of the Spanish and Portuguese *Nação* ("Nation"). This elite arose from the

Lands, and the Dynamics of the Sephardi Diaspora," in Y. Kaplan, ed., *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History* (Leiden, 2008), 33–62.

stratum of merchants and financiers among the Marranos. Some of these men had served as the semirecognized leadership of the *converso* community in Portugal and represented the *Nação* before the central authorities, even negotiating with them on matters of taxation and rights.[9] Several of these merchants became extremely wealthy over time. In many cases, not only did they manage to retain the property that had belonged to their Jewish families before the Expulsion from Spain in 1492 and the great forced conversions of Portugal in 1497, but, after their conversion to Christianity, they managed to exploit the new possibilities that came their way, expanding their economic activity and their involvement in colonial trade, because as Christians they were free of the restrictions that had hindered their Jewish ancestors.[10]

In northwest Europe, the New Christians had the opportunity of living a Jewish life openly, for, despite the first hesitations of the authorities in these Protestant cities regarding the presence of Jews, in the end they preferred it to the presence of Catholics, who were identified with the Spanish enemy. Thus, a significant number of those Catholic New Christians, who had preserved an ember of Judaism, exploited this opportune moment and openly adhered to that religion. In the new circumstances, adhesion to the Jewish religion became a unifying factor for the mercantile networks of the *Nação*, which were spread across trading centers and port cities in various countries. The common Jewish religion could strengthen the connection between the families of the merchants and increase the solidarity among them. It was decidedly in the interest of the Sephardic economic elite to create a shared framework that would assure that the widely dispersed merchants would remain distinct and separate and not assimilate into Christian society.[11]

Jewish consolidation became a goal of the highest importance, and the Jewish confessionalization of the Marranos who left Iberia became a broad plan of action. The Sephardic merchants who established the Jewish centers in Amsterdam and Hamburg, in Livorno and London, and even in Curaçao and Surinam exploited to the full the authority that medieval Jewish law placed in the hands of the community in order to consolidate an autonomous sacral regime, even if those who headed it were not learned in

[9] Joaquim Mendes dos Remédios, *Os Judeos em Portugal*, vol. II (Coimbra, 1928), 43–67; Frederic Mauro, "La Bourgeoisie portugaise au XVIIe siècle," *XVIIe siècle* 40 (1958), 235–57; Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, 6–21; António Borges Coelho, *Cristãos-Novos, Judeus e os Novos Argonautas* (Lisbon, 1998), 73–114.

[10] Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden, 2002), 6–22.

[11] Daniel M. Swetschinski, "Kinship and Commerce: The Foundations of Portuguese Jewish Life in Seventeenth-century Holland," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 15 (1981), 57–74.

the Torah or endowed with halakhic authority. They included the rabbis in the autocratic regime that they created and used them to give halakhic legitimacy to their regulations and decisions.

THE SECULAR LEADERSHIP: THE ROLES OF THE *MAHAMAD* AND ITS AUTHORITY

Anyone who is familiar with the archives of the Sephardic community in Amsterdam cannot fail to be impressed by the meticulous administrative organization, by the bureaucratic order, and by the precise bookkeeping that are reflected in the hundreds of registers and files that have been preserved from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: hefty volumes with astonishingly detailed records of all the decisions; registers of various kinds of confraternities for study and charity; special registers listing all expenses, and other registers recording dues and contributions, in exceptional order, without skipping a single year.[12] Although no other Sephardic community reached such a high level of detail, in other large communities such as Hamburg, Livorno, and London, they sought to follow the example of Amsterdam.

The organizational pattern of the Western Sephardic communities was more or less uniform. The *mahamad* ("board of governors") of each community was composed of three to seven officials known as *parnasim*, depending on the size of the community and the number of its members. The *mahamad* of the communities of Amsterdam and Hamburg had seven *parnasim*, while those of the communities of London and Bordeaux had only three.[13] Each *mahamad* was chosen for a year, following in one way or another the rules and methods that were instituted by the Sephardic community of Venice, which was regarded as the Jewish capital of western Europe until the end of the first third of the seventeenth century, before the rise of Amsterdam as the leading Sephardic center.[14] Although here and there – as in Hamburg, for example – experiments were tried in allowing

[12] One may gain an impression of the wealth of this archive by looking at the inventory of documents it contains; see W[ilhelmina] Chr[istina] Pieterse, *Inventaris van de archieven der Portugees-Israëlietische Gemeente te Amsterdam 1614–1870* (Amsterdam, 1964).

[13] Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London, 2000), 187–93; Ben-Zion Ornan Pinkus, "Die Portugiesische Gemeinde in Hamburg und ihre Führung im 17. Jarhundert," in Michael Studemund-Halévy and Peter Koj, eds., *Die Sefarden in Hamburg. Zur Geschichte einer Minderheit*, vol. I (Hamburg, 1994), 5–19; Albert M. Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England: A History of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Community 1492–1951* (London, 1951), 24–35; Simon Schwarzfuchs, ed., *Le Registre des délibérations de la Nation Juive Portugaise de Bordeaux (1711–1787)* (Paris, 1981), 9–24.

[14] Miriam Bodian, "Amsterdam, Venice and the Marrano Diaspora in the Seventeenth Century," in Jozeph Michman, ed., *Dutch Jewish History* (Jerusalem, 1989), II, 47–65.

the *parnasim* to be chosen by all the members of the community, in the end the system of co-option was accepted in most of the Western Sephardic Diaspora: the members of each *mahamad* would choose their successors in leadership in one way or another. The process that was adopted in Amsterdam determined that the new *parnasim* would be chosen twice annually, most probably to preserve continuity between one *mahamad* and its successor. Four of the *parnasim* were chosen around Rosh Hashana, and three were chosen around Passover. In that way, there were always experienced *parnasim* in office alongside the new ones. In principle, any of the married *jehidim* ("individuals," meaning full members), who had paid their dues, could be elected to the *Mahamad* and also serve as *parnasim* in the confraternities of Torah study or charity, which were administered by the community in a highly centralized system.

Only men who had to their credit a minimum period as Jews were eligible candidates. In Amsterdam, they required at least three years from open adhesion to Judaism, but according to the regulations of 1677 in London they required no more than two years.[15]

The early regulations of the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, which were ratified anew in 1639, unequivocally expressed the unlimited authority that was placed in the hands of the *Mahamad*: "The *Mahamad* has supreme authority over everyone, and no one may act against the decisions the *Mahamad* passes and publishes." Anyone who violated this regulation would be subject to the punishment of excommunication.

The *Mahamad* of the community of Hamburg was given the same degree of power in a regulation of May 1652, which states explicitly: "The lords chosen [for the *Mahamad*] will have supreme power and full authority."[16] The regulations of the Sha'ar Hashamayim community in London of 1663 repeated those of the regulations of the community in Amsterdam almost word for word.[17] About sixty years later, although the actual power of the *Mahamad* in London had declined, it still retained, at least on the symbolic level, the aura of authority, and the *parnasim* were called "Paes da Nação" ("Fathers of the Nation").[18] In Bordeaux as well, where the Jewish community was first recognized officially only at the end of the first quarter of the

[15] *Escamoth* A, Archives of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam [= PIG], in the Municipal Archives of Amsterdam, PA 334, No. 19, p. 78; *Ascamot 5437–5488* of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of London, Archives of the Congregation, No. 129, p. 2 (not paginated in the original).

[16] Ornan Pinkus, "Die Portugiesische Gemeinde in Hamburg," 4–5.

[17] Lionel D. Barnett, ed., *El Libro de los Acuerdos, Being the Records and Accompts of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of London from 1663 to 1681* (Oxford, 1931), 1–14.

[18] *Libro do Mahamad* B, in the Archives of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of London, No. 104, p. 6a.

eighteenth century, matters were no different. On March 24, 1723 it was formally proclaimed that the *parnasim* and the *gabbai* ("warden") were "the absolute masters in the general government of our nation."[19]

Without doubt, the repeated outcries throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries against those who dared to challenge the decisions of the Lords of the *mahamad* are an indication that the demand to maintain strict hierarchical order sometimes met with resistance from some members of the congregations. This opposition, which was usually passive and expressed in lack of interest and indifference rather than in open defiance of the *parnasim*, increased in strength in the second half of the eighteenth century, when quite a few members of the established Sephardic families distanced themselves from community affairs and sometimes even left the congregation.

Only the *mahamad* had the power and the authority to impose fines and punishments, and to excommunicate delinquents and deviants. While the *parnasim* consulted the rabbis in every instance, in order to ascertain the halakhic aspects of each decision, including excommunication, the final word was theirs and theirs alone. The *mahamad* used any means available to impose its authority, and all expressions of protest, opposition, or complaint about their actions met with severe and forcible responses. Scores of *jehidim* were fined, forced to ask forgiveness in public, and sometimes even ostracized and excommunicated "for acting disrespectfully with the members of the *Mahamad*."[20] Class differences found special expression in the punishments levied for transgressions of this kind. Poor people who insulted members of the leadership were liable to lose their monthly stipend from the charity fund.

The *mahamad* represented the interests and reflected the values of the men of means and property, of those who paid dues and were capable of sustaining themselves independently. When resolutions and new statutes were read from the pulpits of synagogues, it was repeatedly emphasized that they were meant to promote the *bem geral* ("general good"), but this in fact referred to the public that was capable of standing on its own two feet financially and managing its affairs without assistance from the charity fund.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP: THE RABBIS AND SCHOLARS

Any visitor to the splendid Sephardic synagogue of Amsterdam which was inaugurated in 1675 would immediately be aware of the supremacy of the

[19] Schwarzfuchs, ed., *Le registre des délibérations*, 106.

[20] Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 228–59; Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden, 2000), 115–39, 184–91.

Mahamad: the *parnasim* had special seats, raised above the others, which enabled them to supervise goings on. Although the *Ḥakham* ("Chief Rabbi") sat on a special, central seat in front of the pulpit, it was clearly lower than those of the *parnasim*. In the interior design of most of the synagogues of the Western Sephardic Diaspora, the supreme authority of the *mahamad* over that of the rabbis was emphasized in different ways. It was clear, though, to the merchants and financiers of the *Nação* that they had to place the task of Jewish training and instruction in the hands of experts in Jewish law who were authorized to issue rulings in accordance with it. The secular leadership received assistance from rabbis of the veteran Sephardic communities in the Ottoman Empire, Italy, and North Africa, especially in the embryonic stages of the establishment of the communities. Halakhic scholars like Rabbi Joseph Pardo from Venice and Rabbi Isaac Uzziel from Fez, who were active in Amsterdam in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and Rabbi Joseph Falcón, who arrived in Bordeaux from Jerusalem around 1717, played a vital role in the religious education of the first generation of those who took up Judaism.[21] However, within a rather short time, local rabbis emerged, educated and trained in Amsterdam, which became the metropolis for former Marranos and produced a body of Torah scholars from which rabbis and cantors were chosen for the centers of the entire Western Sephardic Diaspora.

The rabbis who grew up in Amsterdam could not compete in talmudic expertise with rabbis who had been trained in veteran Torah centers. However, some of them had an extensive European education and had mastered Latin and other languages. Even the most erudite and influential rabbis were compelled to accept the authority of the *mahamad*, and there was no lack of instances in which they were punished and fined for overstepping the bounds of their office. Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel was excommunicated for a day in 1640 after he was impudent to the *mahamad* and challenged its right to excommunicate. After this incident, for one year he was not permitted to preach the sermon he was supposed to give on one Sabbath every month.[22] Rabbi David Nunes Torres, native of Amsterdam, had a confrontation with the Beth Jacob community in The Hague in the early eighteenth century. Because he declared before the *parnasim* that the

[21] On the first rabbis in Amsterdam, see Jacques Zwarts, "De eerste rabbijnen en synagogen van Amsterdam naar archivalische bronnen," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Genootschaap voor de Joodsche Wetenschap in Nederland* 4 (1928), 145–271; on Rabbi Falcón's activities in Bordeaux, see Gérard Nahon, *Juifs et judaïsme à Bordeaux* (Bordeaux, 2003), 120, 123–6.

[22] Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 120, 126, 140.

right to excommunicate belonged to the rabbis and not to them, he was discharged and expelled from his congregation.[23]

The economic elite treated the rabbis with respect but they considered them as salaried employees, who were expected to be subordinate to the authority of the *parnasim*. The *mahamad* consulted the rabbis on halakhic matters and before every decision to excommunicate.[24] The rabbis were also assigned the task of examining and censoring books, including *belles-lettres* in prose and poetry, and their recommendations were accepted by the *parnasim.*[25] Usually they were responsible for teaching some of the higher classes in the community Talmud Torah ("school"), and in Amsterdam, where a *yeshiva* to train rabbis was established, they mainly taught Talmud to the advanced students. One of the tasks imposed on them was to preach in the synagogues on Sabbaths and holidays, and on festive occasions, according to the determination of the *mahamad* and its authorization. Some of them, such as Saul Levi Mortera, Menasseh ben Israel, and Solomon de Olivera, excelled as preachers of outstanding talent.

The wealthy merchant Abraham Israel Pereyra, who served several times as a member of the *Mahamad* in the Amsterdam community, advocated maintaining harmonious relations between the *Mahamad* and the rabbis. He compared the *parnasim* to the governors of a republic, who must obey the commandments of God and impose a divine regime in their state. For this purpose, he proclaimed the duty of honoring Torah scholars and listening to their teaching.

For Pereyra, too, the "governors" (the *parnasim*) stand above everyone else, but to justify this, "they must make their legal rulings consistent with the opinion of the Torah [. . .] and in every instance [they must] decide according to the opinion of the professors."[26] Pereyra did not challenge the supremacy of the *Mahamad*, but he wished to raise that of the rabbis. His words were written during the Sabbatean messianic fervor of 1665–6,

[23] Harm den Boer and Herman P. Salomon, "Haham David Nunes Torres (1660–1728), bezitter van het enig overgebleven exemplar van Uriël da Costa's 'Exame das tradiçoes fariseas,'" *Studia Rosenthaliana* 28 (1994), 18–19, 61; Yosef Kaplan, "Spinoza in the Library of an Early Modern Dutch Sephardic Rabbi," in Camilla Hermanin and Luisa Simonutti, eds., *La centralità del dubbio. Un progetto di Antonio Rotondò*, vol. II (Florence, 2011), 643–5.

[24] Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 118–20.

[25] Israel S. Révah, "Les Écrivains Manuel de Pina et Miguel de Barrios et la censure de la communauté judéo portugaise d'Amsterdam," *Tesoro de los judíos sefardíes* 7 (1965), 74–90; Harm den Boer, *La literatura sefardí de Amsterdam* (Alcalá de Henares, 1996), 79–97; Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 243–9.

[26] Henry Méchoulan, "Abraham Pereyra, *La certeza del Camino*," in Hispanidad y judaísmo en tiempos de Espinoza (Salamanca, 1987), 166.

which prompted a popular repentance movement in Amsterdam, and Pereyra was one of its activist proponents.[27] However, in ordinary times, relations between the *mahamad* and the rabbis were not always peaceful.

Rabbis from veteran communities who held office in communities of the former Marranos found it difficult to accept practices that deviated from the norms of Jewish tradition. Although, in the early stages of the new communities, when questions arose touching upon tenets of faith, the *parnasim* accepted the rulings and opinions of the rabbis, with respect to demands on civil matters among the members of the community, judicial authority was in the hands of the *parnasim*. Sometimes the *parnasim* deliberated on their own, and sometimes they consulted the *Ḥakhamim* for the purpose of issuing the verdict. While they did try to judge according to Jewish law "or close to it," at the same time their rulings were guided by what was known as the "law of merchants." In Amsterdam, as early as the regulations of 1632, it was indicated that they referred to the "law of merchants" as long as that law did not contradict the Torah, as this was shown in consultation with Torah scholars. In 1639, it was stated that, in any lawsuit that should arise, the members of the *Mahamad* should address the "hired rabbis" who served the community, and accept their ruling. If the rabbis could not decide, the members of the *Mahamad* should decide, and the rabbis must accept the decision without challenging it.[28] However, in Livorno, according to the regulations instituted in 1655, in civil suits between members of the community the *parnasim* were not required to consult the rabbis at all, and this approach was not changed until 1670.[29]

SOCIAL CONTROL: IN THE URBAN SPACE AND WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

The *mahamad* had to represent the Sephardic Jewish community before the municipal and state authorities, and they expected it to supervise the behavior of the Jews in the urban space. The mayors of the cities regarded the *mahamad* as responsible for the internal order of the community, preventing any expression of social delinquency or injury to public order, and it was especially required to prevent the entry of vagrants, vagabonds, and unwanted refugees.

[27] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah*, trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton, 1973), 518–45; Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 211–33.

[28] Yosef Kaplan, "Eighteenth-century Rulings by the Rabbinical Court of Amsterdam's Community and their Socio-historical Significance," in Jozeph Michman, ed., *Studies on the History of Dutch Jewry*, vol. V (1988) [Hebrew], 4–6.

[29] Renzo Toaff, "Il 'Libro Nuovo' di statute della Nazione Ebrea di Pisa," in Elio Toaff, ed., *Scritti sull'Ebraismo in memoria di Guido Bedarida* (Florence, 1966), 241–2.

The leadership of all the communities of the *Nação* were never reluctant to accept the assistance of the municipal authorities in order to impose their authority and punish delinquents and violators of discipline. The imprisonment of Jews by the authorities, whether in ordinary prisons or in reformatories designed to correct moral failings and teach a profession (such as the Rasphuis for men and the Spinhuis for women, in Amsterdam and Hamburg), was not an exceptional phenomenon.[30]

In Amsterdam, from the mid eighteenth century on, when the confidence of the *parnasim* was shaken as a result of the severe economic crisis, there was an increased tendency to use arrest by the municipal police as a means of strengthening the power of the *Mahamad*. The leaders of the community were increasingly in need of help from the outside in order to impose their authority, and, in response to their request, in 1751 they received a special privilege from the magistrates of the city that permitted them to hand over any Jew from their community to the municipal authorities, without delay, for defying their authority.[31]

The *parnasim* in Amsterdam were supposed to supervise the members of the community and prevent them from violating the prohibitions and restrictions that had been imposed on all the Jews when the conditions were stipulated, which they had to meet in order to be entitled to reside in the city. Any injury to the religious sentiments of the Christian population, whether in conversations or theological discussions or in writing polemical works against Christianity or in converting Christians who were of totally Christian extraction (unlike the return of the *conversos* to the bosom of Judaism) – all of these were regarded as severe transgressions, and the heads of the Jewish community were expected to act with severity against any deviant behavior in such matters.[32] Sexual relations between Jewish men and Christian women (including prostitutes) were regarded as a heinous sin, and the scandals that arose following the revelation of erotic relations

[30] See, among many examples, the *Memorial de Advertencias*, in the Archives of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam, No. 24, p. 2; the *Libro do Mahamad* A, in the Archives of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of London, No. 103, p. 27r; *Livro de Ascamoth* II, of the Portuguese Community of Hamburg (microfilm in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem), p. 27.

[31] See an extract from the document, in the Archives of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam, No. 87: Extract uyt de Resolutien bij mijne Heeren van de Geregte der Stadt Amsterdam (June 30, 1751).

[32] Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 13–14, 36, 237; Arend H. Huussen, "The Legal Position of the Jews in the Dutch Republic c. 1590–1796," in Jonathan Israel and Reinier Salverda, eds., *Dutch Jewry: Its History and Secular Culture (1500–2000)* (Leiden, 2002), 32–4.

of this kind sometimes aroused furious reactions that threatened the status of the Jews there.[33]

However, the strict policy adopted by the *parnasim* of the Sephardic communities did not derive solely from the desire to satisfy the demands of the rulers or from the need to appease the Christian churches. The *mahamad*'s course of action was guided by the views and aspirations of the social elite of the *Nação*, which regarded itself as leading a highly comprehensive process of cultural socialization within the Sephardic Diaspora. This ambitious project was intended to endow the whole Sephardic community with a Jewish culture which, while it was based on obedience to the Halakhah, was also based, to the same extent, on cultural refinement and courtesy. The *bom judesmo* ("worthy Judaism") that they wished to inculcate was to be a harmonious combination of the ancient Jewish tradition and the principles of high European culture.[34] Just as they were prepared to impose severe punishments, including excommunication, on those who profaned the Torah and violated its commandments, so, too, they were not loath to employ severe measures to punish those found guilty of improper behavior, or those who behaved "indecorosamente" ("indecorously") or with "indêcencia" ("indecency"). Such negative behavior, which was condemned as appropriate to "gente bárbara" ("barbarian people") was condemned even more in relation to members of the *mahamad*, who were expected to exemplify an ideal of "gente política" ("civil people") in that society.[35]

BETWEEN RICH AND POOR, BETWEEN THE RESPECTABLE AND THE INDECENT

Almost every regulation and proclamation read from the pulpit was concluded with set formulas emphasizing that it was intended to preserve the peace and tranquility of the congregation, along with unity and good order. However, these appeals were always issued from the point of view of the owners of the permanent seats in the synagogue, those who were *jehidim*, active members of the congregation who paid the *finta* ("dues") to

[33] Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 13–14, 36, 217–18; Lotte van de Pol, *Het Amsterdamse hoerdom. Prostitutie in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1996), 134–6; Herman P. Salomon, *Portrait of a New Christian:. Fernão Álvares Melo (1569–1632)* (Paris, 1982), 135–9, 323–5.

[34] Yosef Kaplan, "Bom Judesmo: The Western Sephardic Diaspora," in David Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York, 2002), 639–69.

[35] Yosef Kaplan, "*Gente política:* The Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam vis-à-vis Dutch Society," in Chaya Brasz and Yosef Kaplan, eds., *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others* (Leiden, 2001), 21–40.

the community treasury and were capable of contributing to its confraternities – those who, at least in principle, were eligible to serve on the *mahamad*. Although, demographically, the poor were a preponderant factor, they had no voice, nor did they take part in determining community policy or managing current affairs.[36] Throughout the early modern period, an abyss yawned between those who possessed property and those who were needy. This situation persisted after the great crisis of the 1730s, which put an end to the prosperity of the Sephardic Diaspora in northwest Europe. For even after some of the magnates lost a considerable part of their wealth, the communities of the *Nação* retained their status symbols and the barriers that separated the elite families from those supported by charity. Not only did the families who had once been wealthy refuse to forgo the signs of honor and lineage – on the contrary, once they had lost their wealth, these signs became the last bastion still separating them from the lower classes.[37] The honor of the *mahamad* was also supposed to reflect the barrier between the householders, who continued to be the pillars of the communities of the *Nação*, and the common people.

According to the social views prevalent within the Sephardic communities, there was an essential difference between those defined as respectable and worthy and those regarded as contemptible and morally slack. These traits were regarded as associative identifying marks that could not be nullified or changed. In contrast to "reputasão" ("reputation"), "honor," "honroso nome" ("an honorable name"), and "dignidade," which were the natural traits of "pessoas decentes" ("decent people"), the regulations repeatedly condemned the "escandalosa vida" ("scandalous way of life") and "ruins customes" ("despicable customs") of those defined as "pessoas indecentes" ("indecent people").

The abyss between them affected every area of life and even extended after death. Typical of this was the resolution of November 1702 in Amsterdam regarding the need to allocate a new plot in the cemetery in Ouderkerk, near Amsterdam, to black Jews and "pessoas que parecer indignas" ("unworthy people").[38] Although this regulation first emphasizes the social inferiority of the descendants of the slaves converted to Judaism and brought from the colonies to Amsterdam, it would not be far from the truth to conclude from this wording that in the eyes of the leaders of the *Nação*, "pessoas indignas" were seen as those who could not change

[36] See Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare among the Portuguese Jews in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Oxford, 2012).

[37] Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 292–3.

[38] *Escamoth* B, Archives of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam, No. 20, p. 338.

their nature, just as a person cannot alter the color of his or her skin.[39] In principle, it was possible to be a "pobre honrado" ("a decent poor person") in that society, but poverty was usually identified with religious laxity and moral turpitude. Similarly, it was possible to be considered a "decent Ashkenazi," but German and Polish Jews in general were often mentioned in the context of contemptible customs and behavior. Not only were their behavior and manners seen as coarse and disgusting, but their Jewishness was also seen as flawed, and they were occasionally condemned for supposedly being willing to violate the commandments or commit transgressions in pursuit of money or for lack of conscience.[40]

In this society, there could be no greater injury than an injury to one's good name and honor. Since doubting a person's decency had such severe connotations, it became a means often used in personal and family disputes. Hence, in all of the Sephardic communities, it was strictly prohibited to circulate libelous writing or parodies against members of the *Nação* – though the *parnasim* were incapable of suppressing writing of this kind, which was circulated with great frequency, pasted on the doors of synagogues or the gates of cemeteries, on the bridges of the city and in the squares, at the entrance to the bourse or in other public places where Jews went, and of course on the doors of the houses of the people in question. The threat of excommunication was leveled against those who transgressed in this area or against those who knew the identity of delinquents and refused to testify. Frequently, the *cantigas infamatorias* ("defamatory poems") or drawings, and the insulting writing pasted on the walls of the community buildings, became the weapon of the common people and the needy, who sought by this means to protest against the *mahamad* or to avenge the discrimination against them.[41]

HETERODOXY AND DISSENT

Robert Bonfil showed incisively that the life experience of the *conversos* in the early modern period made a most significant contribution "to the inception of the modern sense of the unlimited right to self-definition."[42]

[39] On the attitude toward Blacks in the Western Sephardic Diaspora in the early modern period, see Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. 166–216.

[40] Yosef Kaplan, "The Portuguese Community in 17th-century Amsterdam and the Ashkenazi World," in Michman, ed., *Dutch Jewish History*, III, 23–45.

[41] Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 228–31.

[42] Robert Bonfil, "Dubious Crimes in Sixteenth-century Italy: Rethinking the Relations between Jews, Christians, and *Conversos* in Pre-modern Europe," in Moshe Lazar and Stephen Haliczer, eds., *The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492* (Lancaster, CA, 1997), 307–8.

The *converso* began to create new combinations of official religious affiliation and identity and inner self-definition, and he even imbued the latter with beliefs, views, and normative behavior according to his individual choice and decision.

What characterized the *conversos* in Iberia also characterized a good number of those who officially adhered to Judaism but were nevertheless unable to accept some of its basic religious outlooks, or who found it difficult to adapt to a way of life based on observance of the Halakhah. Quite a few Marranos preferred to straddle the fence without joining a Jewish community, and the Sephardic leadership took measures to struggle against this phenomenon. In most of the Sephardic communities, regulations were instituted forbidding entry to the synagogue to uncircumcised men, and in Sephardic cemeteries it was strictly forbidden to bury uncircumcised men.[43] Similarly, seeing that former *conversos* and their descendants were not deterred from traveling to Spain and Portugal, or to other countries where Judaism was forbidden, from 1644 onward strict regulations were adopted in the communities of Amsterdam, Livorno, Hamburg, and London against going to places defined as "terras de idolatria" ("lands of idolatry"), because being there entailed denial of Judaism and violation of the commandments, and it usually required participation in Catholic rituals as well. Those who went to forbidden destinations were required to ask forgiveness from the entire congregation from the pulpit of the synagogue, and, for several years, they were forbidden to be called to the Torah or to perform any functions in the congregation.[44]

However, more than anything else, the community leaders were perturbed by *conversos* who expressed open ideological reservations regarding the Jewish religious culture they had encountered directly for the first time. Some of the *conversos* who left Spain and Portugal brought with them a rich reservoir of critical views, which had been formed in the lands of the Inquisition over the generations. The philosophical rationalism that took root among quite a few Iberian Jewish intellectuals during the Middle Ages had also penetrated extensive circles among the *conversos* in the early fifteenth century. Many *conversos*, who proved to be *judaizantes*, observing certain Jewish ceremonies, at the same time maintained a popular version of Averroistic nihilism.[45] That is to say, they denied the immortality of the

[43] Yosef Kaplan, "Attitudes towards Circumcision among the Early Modern Sephardim," in Joseph R. Hacker, Yosef Kaplan, and Benjamin Z. Kedar, eds., *From Sages to Savants: Studies Presented to Avraham Grossman* (Jerusalem, 2010) [Hebrew], 353–89.

[44] Kaplan, "Amsterdam, the Forbidden Lands," 43–4.

[45] Francisco Márquez Villanueva, "'Nacer y morir como bestias' (criptojudaísmo y criptoaverroísmo)," in Anita Novinsky and María Luiza Tucci Carneiro, eds., *Inquisição: ensaios sobre mentalidade, heresías e arte* (São Paulo, 1992), 11–34.

soul, divine providence, and the Judeo-Christian doctrine of reward and punishment.

Rumors regarding the presence of radical heretics among the Marranos who had left Iberia and settled in the cities where new Sephardic communities had been established were widespread in western Europe, and sometimes this was given as a reason against granting the Jews permission to settle there. The subject of the immortality of the soul was doubtless particularly sensitive, because it was one of the basic tenets of Christian belief. At the end of the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, Catholic theologians voiced vehement responses to the threat of circulation of Averroistic views. The arguments of Pietro Pomponazzi, that the immortality of the soul could not be proven by rational means, so that it had to be taken on faith, shocked the Catholic establishment, and many works were written on this topic.[46] Portugal did not stand aloof from controversy surrounding this sensitive issue. Alvaro Gomes, a *converso* theologian who taught for a certain time at the University of Coimbra, wrote a detailed work in 1550 in which he sought to reconcile the negative opinions of Aristotle with the views of Plato and the Christian Church, and in that manner to defend the validity of belief in the immortality of the soul.[47]

We find that this subject remained on the agenda in the Western Sephardic communities throughout the seventeenth century and even later. Not only were monographs devoted to this subject by Semuel da Silva and Rabbi Mosseh Rafael d'Aguilar, but it also occupied a prominent place in the works of central rabbis such as Mortera, Menasseh ben Israel, Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, and others, and in the works of the physicians Yshac Cardoso and Isaac Orobio de Castro, two of the leading intellectuals among the Marranos who openly adopted Judaism.[48]

[46] Paul O. Kristeller, "Two unpublished 'Questions on the Soul' of Pietro Pomponazzi," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 9 (1955), 76–101; Ėtienne Gilson, "Autour de Pomponazzi: problématique de l'immortalité de l'âme en Italie au début du XVIe siècle," *Archives d'histoire doctrinal et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 36 (1961), 163–279; Gilson, 'L'Affaire de l'immortalité de l'âme au début du XVI siècle," in Vittore Branca, ed., *Umanesimo europeo e umanesimo veneziano* (Venice, 1963), 31–61.

[47] Alvaro Gomes, *Tractado da perfeiçaom da alma*, introduction and notes by A. Moreira de Sá (Coimbra, 1947).

[48] Shlomo Berger, *Classical Oratory and the Sephardim of Amsterdam: Rabbi Aguilar's "Tratado de la Retórica"* (Hilversum, 1996), 13–14; Alexander Altman, "Eternality of Punishment: A Theological Controversy within the Amsterdam Rabbinate in the Thirties of the Seventeenth Century," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 40 (1972), 1–88; Marc Saperstein, "Saul Levi Morteira's Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 25 (1991), 131–48; Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, 249–56.

The one who wrote the most vehement criticism of belief in the immortality of the soul was Uriel da Costa, a Marrano from Porto whose opinions and actions created a commotion even beyond the Western Sephardic Diaspora. In 1624, he published *Exame das tradiçoes phariseas* [Examination of Pharisaic Traditions] in Amsterdam. Da Costa arrived in Hamburg in 1616, and immediately after openly adopting Judaism he wrote his objections to the Oral Law and against rabbinical Judaism. His arguments were penetrating: the Sages had in fact created a new law and given it status equal to the written Torah. As recommended by Rabbi Judah Arieh Modena, who also wrote a work against da Costa's views, he was excommunicated in Venice and Hamburg, and news of the excommunication also spread to Amsterdam, where the Sephardic *parnasim* ratified, in 1623, the excommunication against him.

Da Costa sharpened his arguments, and, in identification with the doctrine of the Sadducees, he wrote a work that expanded the scope of his critique of the Pharisees. He published a comprehensive work against the Pharisaic tradition arguing that the soul does not leave the body upon death, but is part of it; the human soul is no different from that of any other living creature; and what makes the human soul unique is its rationality.

Under pressure from the Calvinist Church, almost all the copies of the book were burnt. Da Costa was imprisoned, and he was only released after his two brothers paid a forfeit of 1,200 guilders.[49] Around 1628, because the distress of excommunication was a great burden on his life, da Costa decided to be reconciled with the Sephardic community, and, the ban against him was lifted. But within four years someone informed the community that he had clung to his heresy and he was excommunicated again. He lived in excommunication for nearly seven years until he broke down and agreed to ask forgiveness publicly in the synagogue, in a very humiliating ceremony. In April 1640, shortly afterward, he took his own life. Next to his body was found an autobiography, which he managed to complete during his final days. In this work, he leveled severe criticism not only against his community but against all of Judaism.[50] He expressed identification with natural religion, the religion of universal reason: "if men would follow the dictates of right reason and live according to the laws which nature dictates to them, they would all mutually love and compassionate one another."[51]

[49] Uriel da Costa, *Examination of Pharisaic Traditions*, supplemented by Semuel da Silva's *Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul*, trans., notes, and intro. by H. P. Salomon and I. S. D. Sassoon (Leiden, 1993), 14–17.

[50] Ibid., 18–24.

[51] See ibid., 556–64, and see 564, the full text of the English translation of da Costa's autobiography, by John Whiston (London, 1740). See also Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind* (Oxford, 2001), 165–73; Adam Sutcliffe,

A short time after the suicide, on the Sabbath when the story of Korach is read, Rabbi Mortera preached against the "pernicious view" of those who have a "materialistic conception of the soul," including the worst of them all, "the cursed sect of the Sadducees, who denied all spiritual reward and punishment."[52]

A few years afterward, Mortera had to cope with another episode of heresy, which also left a deep impression on the Amsterdam community. In 1656, Baruch Spinoza was excommunicated. He was 24 years old at the time, a native of the city, and he had received his Jewish education in the community in which he had been brought up. It is very difficult to know precisely what views and deeds were attributed to Spinoza at that time, because there is no proof that the philosophical views that he formulated in his writing years later had already occurred to him. At that very time, Juan de Prado, a Marrano physician from Spain, who had joined the community a few years earlier, was required to beg forgiveness for "having in the past adhered to evil beliefs, and having evinced scant attachment to the service of God and the fulfillment of his holy Law."[53] Later testimony from someone who had met Spinoza and Prado in Amsterdam that year revealed that the "Jewish synagogue had excommunicated and expelled them because they had become atheists." The same source also states that they both ceased to keep the commandments after it became clear to them that the Torah of Moses "was not true, that the soul does not outlive the body, and that God exists in a philosophical sense only."[54]

Spinoza's criticism of Judaism in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, which was first published anonymously in 1670, was sophisticated and sharp. With astonishing mastery of the Bible and impressive knowledge of the Hebrew language, Spinoza proposed a historical and philological critical reading of the Bible. Though he expressed his ideas with great caution, readers had no trouble understanding the subversive meaning of his

'Regulating Sociability: Rabbinical Authority and Jewish–Christian Interaction in Seventeenth-century Amsterdam," in Daniel Frank and Matt Goldish, eds., *Rabbinical Culture and Its Critics: Jewish Authority, Dissent and Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Times* (Detroit, 2008), 299–301.

[52] Marc Saperstein, *Exile in Amsterdam: Saul Levi Morteira's Sermons to a Congregation of "New Jews"* (Cincinnati, 2003), 214–15; see also Saperstein, "The Treatment of 'Heretical Views' in the Sermons of Saul Levi Morteira of Amsterdam," in Frank and Goldish, eds., *Rabbinical Culture and Its Critics*, 313–34.

[53] Israel S. Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr. Juan de Prado* (Paris, 1959), 57; Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, trans. from the Hebrew by Raphael Loewe (Oxford, 1989), 130, and see also pp. 122–60; Natalia Muchnik, *Une Vie marrane. Les pérégrinations de Juan de Prado dans l'Europe du XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 2005), 391–448.

[54] Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr. Juan de Prado*, 64; Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 133.

conception: the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, and reason, not divine revelation, is the highest ethical authority. Spinoza vehemently denied the idea that the Jews were the chosen people, and he attributed the existence of the Jews throughout history, scattered and without a homeland, to the hatred of the nations, which prevented their assimilation – and not to divine providence. Although no Jewish author directly challenged Spinoza's ideas, one may find efforts to refute his fundamental arguments in many works by writers of the Western Sephardic Diaspora, defending God's divine providence for the Jews. In a city like Amsterdam, where the Jews were not restricted to a specific residential quarter and could enter into free contact with the varied population of the city, close intellectual ties were formed between them and Christian scholars. Well-educated Sephardic Jews, who knew many languages and possessed broad philosophical knowledge, were exposed to Cartesianism and to heterodox views of various kinds, which had taken hold among the many dissenters from different countries who took refuge in the Dutch Republic.[55] However, even those Sephardic Jews who fought against heterodox views sometimes became, paradoxically and against their will, agents of the very views they sought to contradict, by means of the critical works they composed against them.

Moreover, along with radical criticism on the part of those who wished to deny Judaism its uniqueness, throughout the entire early modern period, there was an additional critique, which, while more modest in its aims, did express the opinions and mood of a large and varied public. In many dozens of works written throughout the period, Sephardic rabbis complain about the clear disrespect within the communities of former Marranos for them and for rabbinical culture. In some cases they complain because certain types of belief were regarded as superstitious, and about disdain for sermons, which was common in rationalist circles. However, usually this opposition was more fundamental, directed at the basis of rabbinical culture, the content of which was alien to many Marranos who openly adopted Judaism. This opposition had roots in the Spanish Jewish culture of the late Middle Ages. Parallel to the anticlerical criticism that was voiced in Christian Spain, a penetrating criticism of the rabbis and Talmudists developed among Iberian Jews.[56] Several generations later, in

[55] Sutcliffe, "Regulating Sociability," 294–301.

[56] See Eliezer Gutwirth, "Conversions to Christianity amongst Fifteenth-century Spanish Jews: An Alternative Explanation," in *Studies on the History of the Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance Period* (Tel Aviv, 1993), 97–121. On *converso* criticism of ecclesiastical authority, see Miriam Bodian, "From the Dossiers of the Inquisition: Crypto-Jewish Attacks on Ecclesiastical Authority," in Frank and Goldish, eds., *Rabbinic Culture and its Critics*, 273–87.

the communities of the Western Sephardic Diaspora, this critique was abetted by arguments voiced by Protestants against the way the Catholic Church had interpreted Scripture for centuries. Shalom Rosenberg has called this trend "an abortive movement, a sort of Jewish Protestantism which did not develop sufficient strength to change the face of reality."[57]

It should be pointed out that criticism of rabbinical Judaism in this period was not restricted to the Western Sephardic Diaspora – but also that works produced outside the world of the former Marranos were connected in one way or another to their communities. For example, Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo, from Candia, did not refrain from making pointed remarks against the rabbis or from praising the Karaites, yet it is no coincidence that the two works of his relevant to this matter were printed in Amsterdam in 1629.[58] Likewise, *Kol Sakhal* [A Fool's Voice], the most systematic and sophisticated critique of Pharisaic Judaism, was not written by a Sephardic Jew. This is an apocryphal work, which ostensibly wound up in the hands of Judah Arieh Modena in 1622, though in fact he himself wrote it. He named the imaginary author of the book Amitai bar Yedaiah and placed him in Alcalá, Spain. However, since he stated that the book was written in 1500, eight years after the expulsion of the Jews, he insinuated that the author was a *converso*. This implies that, in Modena's view, it was appropriate to attribute such a critical view of the Pharisees and their rabbinical followers to an author who belonged to Marrano circles![59]

In the second half of the seventeenth century when Christian scholars, especially Calvinists, became aware of Karaism and tended to regard it as an expression of rational Judaism, some Sephardic Jews also began to see it as a model for their own identity.[60] There is evidence that in both Amsterdam and London some Sephardic Jews expressed open admiration for Karaite views, and, in 1712, the *Mahamad* of Amsterdam excommunicated three members of the community because "they followed the sect of the Karaites

[57] Shalom Rosenberg, "Emunat Hakhamim," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 286.

[58] Isaac Barzilay, *Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo (Yashar of Candia): His Life, Works and Times* (Leiden, 1974); Joseph d'Ancona, "Delmedigo, Menasseh ben Israel en Spinoza," *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Genootschap voor de Joodsche Wetenschap in Nederland* 6 (1940), 105–52.

[59] On this work, see Talya Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars of Exile: "Voice of a Fool," an Early Modern Jewish Critique of Rabbinic Culture* (Stanford, 1997).

[60] Jan van den Berg, "Proto-Protestants? The Image of the Karaites as a Mirror of the Catholic–Protestant Controversy in the Seventeenth Century," in Jan van den Berg and Ernestine G. E. van der Wall, eds., *Jewish–Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century: Studies and Documents* (Dordrecht, 1988), 33–49; Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 234–79; Silvia Berti, "Erudition and Religion in the Judeo-Christian Encounter," *Hebraic Political Studies* 1 (2005), 110–20.

and behaved like them." The wording of the writ of excommunication is the same as that of Spinoza's excommunication (which was mainly based on the one that appears in *Kol Bo*), showing the severity with which the community related to this case.[61] Most likely the three excommunicated men were merely the tiniest indication of a much broader phenomenon: about a century later, Henri Grégoire stated that "around a hundred years ago," fifty Jewish families in Amsterdam expressed the desire to declare themselves Karaites, but the municipal authorities were opposed, apparently because they did not wish to weaken the Sephardic community. Following this, several of those families decided to convert to the Calvinist religion.[62] Indeed, two of the three self-styled Karaites who were excommunicated were baptized shortly after being expelled from their community.

The "Karaites" in Amsterdam in the early eighteenth century constituted the only group effort in the history of the Western Sephardic Diaspora to create a conceptual and organizational substitute for halakhic Judaism. This effort failed, but its failure heralded the waves both of conversion and of other forms of assimilation that affected the Sephardic Jews of western Europe during the eighteenth century.

DISCIPLINE AND COLLECTIVE BOUNDARIES

The perceptive claim of the American sociologist Philip Gorski that "what steam did for the modern economy [. . .] discipline did for the modern polity" also applies to the communities of the Western Sephardic Diaspora.[63] The need to shape new communities of Marranos that joined the Jewish religion and to educate former *conversos* to accept communal discipline, although they had never tasted Jewish life in a communal framework, led to the creation of rigid disciplinary methods in most of the Sephardic communities, and these occasionally became "deviant factories," just as the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal also became, in some circumstances, "factories" of Judaizers and heretics. Naturally, throughout the entire seventeenth century, while these communities were consolidating their Jewish character, they produced deviants from within them, and by means of the struggle against these deviants, they sharpened the lines of their particularity as communities of "New Jews."

[61] Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 254–79; and see the dissenting interpretation of Marina Rustow, "Karaites Real and Imagined: Three Cases of Jewish Heresy," *Past and Present* 197, 1 (2007), 35–74.

[62] Richard H. Popkin, "Les Caraïtes et l'emancipation des Juifs," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 13 (1981), 134–47.

[63] Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, 2003), p. xvi.

In all the Western Sephardic Diaspora, extensive mechanisms of supervision were established. These were intended to mark the boundaries of the collective identity of a community that was very heterogeneous with respect to its views and beliefs. As in the Calvinist presbyteries in Emden or the cities of the Dutch Republic, or in various communities of belief in exile during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so, too, in these Sephardic communities a significant part of the activity of the leadership was devoted to imposing discipline.[64]

Regulations demanding strict religious and moral behavior were regularly read out loud in the synagogues, including grave threats against those who violated communal discipline. Members of the congregation were frequently reprimanded publicly for their transgressions and required to ask forgiveness from the pulpit of the synagogue by reading degrading confessions, whose words were dictated to them by the *parnasim*. Threats of excommunication were also a routine matter, and in many cases proclamations of excommunication were issued in awe-inspiring ceremonies, that included sounding the *shofar* (ram's horn trumpet), with the doors of the Holy Ark open, and sometimes those attending the ceremony held flaming black candles. Excommunicated people who wished to resume a normative way of life also underwent humiliating ceremonies. Sometimes these were held in the office of the *mahamad* (in the case of well-connected householders), but they usually took place in the sanctuary of the synagogue, in the presence of the congregation. The reinstated individuals were often required to sit on the mourners' bench near the pulpit of the synagogue for a number of weeks; they were also required to fast twice a week during that time, and the men were forbidden to shave.[65]

The number of people excommunicated, mainly in the communities of Amsterdam and Hamburg, was quite high. In each of these two communities, during the seventeenth century, about forty people were punished in this way.[66] For the sake of comparison, in the Calvinist church of Amsterdam between 1578 and 1700, only thirty-three people were excommunicated, out of a total of 5,754 Calvinists who were tried for religious and moral transgressions.[67] The frequency with which the *Mahamad* made

[64] Heinz Schilling, *Civic Calvinism in Northwestern Germany and the Netherlands, Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (Kirksville, 1991), 40–52.

[65] Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 120–33; Kaplan, *Religion, Politics and Freedom of Conscience: Excommunication in Early Modern Jewish Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 2010), 26.

[66] Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 140–2, 184–91.

[67] Herman Roodenbuurg, *Onder Censuur. De kerkelijke tucht in de gereformeerde gemeente van Amsterdam, 1578–1700* (Hilversum, 1990), 72–145; Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht, 1578–1620* (Oxford, 1995), 35.

use of the punishment of excommunication in Amsterdam disturbed the municipal authorities, which occasionally intervened in response to complaints lodged by Sephardic merchants who were injured by its harsh measures. In early 1683, the Amsterdam authorities even issued a directive forbidding the *Mahamad* to excommunicate without receiving prior permission. Although this directive was rescinded within a few months, the *Mahamad* learned a lesson from the episode, and afterward the number of actual excommunications began to decrease.[68] Although restrictions were imposed on the right to excommunicate in the London community, a number of excommunications were nevertheless proclaimed, and in 1712, an extremely severe form of excommunication was imposed on a young man named Isaac Coronel Senior for abducting a young woman and seeking to marry her against her father's wishes.[69]

Most of those excommunicated repented within a short time, and very few remained in excommunication for long periods. The number of those who, like Spinoza, were never reconciled with the community and whose excommunication was never rescinded was negligible. However, in the 1680s the *parnasim* of Amsterdam sometimes preferred to expel delinquents from the congregation rather than excommunicating them. This was in order to avoid all the complications that arose because of the sacral meaning of excommunication. It appears that many Sephardic Jews did not avoid contact with the excommunicated people, and, as a result, the deterrent power of the measure was impaired, and its sacral and magical significance was also reduced.[70] Other communities followed in the footsteps of Amsterdam and also imposed the penalty of *apartado da nação*, which did bring about the expulsion of delinquents from the community and denied them entry to the synagogue as well as the religious and social services enjoyed by members of the congregation; however, it did not prohibit social contact with the person expelled, including the possibility of maintaining financial and commercial relations with him.[71]

The similarity between the significant focuses of activity typical of Protestant churches in the early modern period and those that existed in the central communities of the Western Sephardic Diaspora is striking. Schilling divided the disciplinary control of the church in Emden into

[68] Kaplan, *Religion, Politics and Freedom of Conscience*, 26–7.

[69] Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England*, 92; Yosef Kaplan, "Clandestine Marriage in Amsterdam, Broken Hearts in Hamburg and a Kidnapping in London," in Elisheva Baumgarten, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, and Roni Weinstein, eds., *Tov Elem: Memory, Community and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Societies. Essays in Honor of Robert Bonfil* (Jerusalem, 2011) [Hebrew], 179–86.

[70] Kaplan, *Religion, Politics and Freedom of Conscience.*

[71] Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 194–5.

three categories: (1) dogmatic discipline; (2) moral discipline, particularly as applied to sexual mores and social conduct; and (3) special discipline, which related to general supervision of the members' behavior, especially those who traveled to other places. The first two categories received the most attention, and in the beginning stages of these communities, about a third of the disciplinary matters that were judged touched upon dogma, which is to say deviation from the Calvinist Church's tenets of faith. However, after these communities were well established, there was a steep decline in the intensity of the struggle for ideological purity, and most of the effort was invested in imposing ethical discipline, especially in family life. By the mid seventeenth century, public behavior attracted much more of the attention of the presbyteries than the private behavior of the members of the denomination. At that time emphasis was placed on quarrels and fights, violence, slander, luxuries, drunkenness, and the like. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, emphasis shifted to areas of private morality, i.e. family and sexual life.[72]

With respect to the Sephardic communities, it is impossible to undertake a detailed statistical analysis of the kind made regarding the church in Emden or those in Groningen and Leiden. However, the impression gleaned from reading the decisions concerning discipline and the punishments and excommunications imposed in the Sephardic communities is that the tendencies were similar. While they were being consolidated, emphasis was placed on decidedly dogmatic matters, ideological deviance, and public violation of the commandments. Gradually emphasis shifted to familial and sexual morality, so that, by the mid eighteenth century, most of the excommunications were in response to secret and fraudulent marriages, or to adultery.[73]

Because of the freedom of conscience that prevailed in the Dutch Republic from its very inception, membership in the Jewish community had always been voluntary. Residents of the Dutch Republic were not required to belong to any particular church, and not even the Calvinist Church, which was recognized as the sole official church of the state, could obligate anyone to join its ranks. Hence, only a relatively small percentage of the population of the Republic belonged formally to the Reformed Church. In contrast, although some of the Marranos who arrived in Holland were in no hurry to join the Jewish community, most of the members of the *Nação* in Amsterdam did become members of the Sephardic community. As immigrants who needed a home and the security

[72] Schilling, *Civic Calvinism in Northwestern Germany and the Netherlands*, 46–54.
[73] Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 280–300; Kaplan, "Clandestine Marriage in Amsterdam," 171–90.

that a common framework offered them, financially, socially, and culturally, they preferred to join it, but not necessarily for specifically religious reasons. In London, too, membership in the Jewish community was voluntary, and, although some of the Portuguese and Spanish immigrants chose to remain outside the communal framework, the majority preferred to gather under the communal roof, for the same reasons as their coreligionists in Amsterdam.

In these places, because it was possible to live outside any ecclesiastical or corporate framework, it was not easy for the communal leadership to impose its authority. The ostracized or excommunicated were not forced to repent and be reconciled with the community, since they could just as well live outside it. The freedom of action offered by this liberty of conscience explains how Uriel da Costa could live outside the communal framework for years, and why Spinoza could leave the Jewish community without having to join another church. However, in the end, most of the immigrants, including most of those who had been excommunicated, preferred the Jewish communal framework to a hard life of isolation in a foreign country. Hence, unlike Dutch society, where the Reformed Church was that of the *preciezen* – devout people who chose on their own to live under strict Calvinist discipline – whereas the indifferent, those with weak faith, and of course the dissidents and atheists as well, remained unaffiliated, the Sephardic Jewish community contained, along with people of strong faith, those who had joined it without believing in the religion, and sometimes those who had no other choice.

However, this situation changed during the eighteenth century, since quite a few Sephardic Jews felt secure enough to break out of the framework of their community. Because of aspirations for social mobility, and as a result of comprehensive acculturation, they left their communities, sometimes even severing themselves completely from Judaism. This tendency was especially notable in places like Amsterdam and London.[74] In Hamburg, by contrast, the community dwindled and lost most of its members as a result of the heavy taxes imposed upon them by the authorities.

In these circumstances, the communities became more homogeneous: those who stayed in them became increasingly similar to the *preciezen* of the Calvinist Church, since they remained as a result of an ideological choice. By contrast, the natural religion of Uriel da Costa and Spinoza's philosophy now spoke to those Jews who were drawn to deism or to the

[74] Yosef Kaplan, "Secularizing the Portuguese Jews: Integration and Orthodoxy in Early Modern Judaism," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007), 99–110; Todd M. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History 1656–1945* (Bloomington, 1990), 9–33.

new radical views in the spirit of the Enlightenment. The process of confessionalization lost impetus, immigration from Iberia ceased, and no new Marranos joined the Sephardic communities. In response to secularization and the perceived threat of abandonment by assimilated Sephardic Jews, whose presence on the margins of the congregation and outside it could offer a negative model for others, the leaders issued more extreme threats, and the language of the sermons and regulations of the Sephardic community became more rigid and belligerent. The community became a bastion of orthodoxy, continuing to threaten delinquents and rebels with excommunication with "all the curses of the Holy Torah," but those against whom these threats were leveled were increasingly distant and indifferent to them.

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CHAPTER 15

EDUCATION AND HOMILETICS

MARC SAPERSTEIN

A case can be made for continuity between the medieval and early modern periods with regard to education and homiletics. The year 1500, with the massive dislocation of the Iberian Peninsula's Jewish population to new locations shortly before and after this year, brought about little change in the history of Jewish preaching. The classic Sephardic style of the sermon, established in the second half of the fifteenth century, continued to predominate in communities of the Sephardic diaspora for two centuries beyond the Expulsion. Significant changes in preaching style and new occasions for preaching begin only at the very end of our period and flourish in the nineteenth century.[1] Similarly with education: the basic institutions of the early modern period – the *ḥeder* and its curriculum, the social status of the *melamed*, the private tutor, the talmudic academy and the nature of the study that took place there, the role of the established community with regard to these institutions, the opportunities of education for girls – show marked continuities with the "medieval" (pre-1500) period.

On the other hand, the early modern period includes the emergence of new Jewish communities, not just in the "New World" but also in Europe. Livorno, Hamburg, Amsterdam, and London would be obvious examples, with origins in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In such communities, the establishment of a respectable educational system and the role of the rabbi as teacher and preacher, while certainly influenced by models from the past, were obviously critical and worthy of special attention. Amsterdam presents perhaps the most dramatic example of a community created *ex nihilo* around the turn of the seventeenth century; within a generation, the community was producing its own rabbis, including one of international calibre:

[1] These continuities are reflected in the periodization of my two books: Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800* (New Haven, 1989) and *Jewish Preaching in Times of War 1800–2001* (Oxford, 2008).

Menasseh ben Israel – a success story for Jewish education, Jewish homiletics, and rabbinic leadership that could hardly have been exceeded.[2]

EDUCATION

Jewish collective memory tends to idealize the educational institutions of traditional Jewish society. Common perceptions are that universal education was provided by the Jewish community for its children, resulting in a level of literacy far superior to that of neighbors in the host society, culminating in a rigorous devotion of intellectual energy to the advanced study of talmudic texts, honing a capacity for rigorous analysis that eventually would be channeled into secular subjects with extraordinary levels of success.

An illuminating statement of this idealized depiction of Jewish education was presented by Nathan Hannover at the conclusion of his chronicle of the Cossack massacres in Poland during the years 1648–9. Following the detailed report of the harrowing loss of life in many different communities, he turns to an elegiac memorialization of a society that may have seemed to him to be destroyed beyond hope of recovery. The first theme he addresses is the unique achievements of Polish Jewry in the realm of education, without peer anywhere else in the Jewish world.

In Hannover's depiction, responsibility for education was shared between individual family and community, with primary weight upon the former. At the pinnacle was the talmudic academy (*yeshiva*), maintained by each significant community. The students in the academy were maintained by public funds, generally living with individual families who paid for their support. The *yeshiva* students in turn taught younger boys, who were provided with food from charitable institutions. An inspector appointed by the head of the academy would go from school to school to supervise instruction and test the achievements of the students at the end of every week. The result was that "There was scarcely a house in all the Kingdom of Poland where its members did not occupy themselves with the study of Torah."[3]

[2] For recent work on this community in its first century, see Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, 1997); Daniel Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London, 2000); essays by Swetschinski, Jonathan Israel, and Yosef Kaplan in J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, and I. Schöffer, eds., *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Oxford, 2002); Marc Saperstein, *Exile in Amsterdam: Saul Levi Morteira's Sermons to a Congregation of "New Jews"* (Cincinnati, 2003); and Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare among the Portuguese Jews in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Oxford, 2012).

[3] Nathan Hannover, *Abyss of Despair (Yeven Metzulah)* (New York, 1950), 110–16; Simhah Asaf, *Mekorot le-Toledot ha-Ḥinukh be-Yisra'el*, 4 vols. in 3 (Tel Aviv, 1930–54), I, 110–12.

Not surprisingly, the reality is more complex. Hannover's tendency to generalize about each community in the kingdom of Poland leads naturally to exaggeration. There were other great centers of Jewish cultural creativity based on developed systems of education that rivaled Poland. Not a few leading figures were strongly dissatisfied with the models of instruction in the traditional institutions, from the elementary schools to the most famous talmudic academies, and they left a literature of powerful criticism. We shall return to this critique after surveying the educational opportunities in the other major centers of Jewish life.

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

At the very beginning of the early modern period, the native Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire received an influx of refugees from Spain and Portugal. Suffering the psychological trauma of expulsion from an environment in which they felt deeply rooted, they nevertheless succeeded in transferring much of their cultural heritage to a new location and in creating new institutions in which Sephardic traditions were proudly perpetuated and transmitted to a new generation. Not surprisingly, children of wealthy families, educated by private tutors, were given what a leading scholar has described as a "variegated and profound education, both Jewish and general in character."[4] But a sound introduction to classical texts of the tradition was not limited to the wealthy. A non-Sephardic, Arabic-speaking Jew decried the extent to which his own community felt alienated from the Bible because of the absence of an accessible Arabic translation. By contrast, he expresses admiration for the immigrants from the Iberian Peninsula, whose teachers explained the words of the Torah to their children by translating them into the Ladino language; as a result, there were very few Sephardic Jews ignorant of the Bible, except for the newly arrived *conversos* who had been educated as Christians.[5]

One of the glories of Ottoman Jewry was the Great Talmud Torah, established at Salonika, probably in 1520. The initial tendency of immigrants from Spain and Portugal who arrived in Salonika, as in Istanbul, was to join in small congregations with others from the same region, or even

[4] Joseph Hacker, "The Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 95–135, esp. 107.

[5] Hacker, "Intellectual Activity," 108. For a general characterization of elementary education in Salonika, based on responsa by one of its leading rabbis, see Morris Goodblatt, *Jewish Life in Turkey, as Reflected in the Legal Writings of Samuel de Medina* (New York, 1952), 105.

the same city. The result was a plethora of congregations.[6] Before long, however, the desirability of pooling resources into a large common institution became clear. The large central building included a school intended for all the children of the city, who studied there from ages 4 to 13. The best students would then move on to study in a *yeshiva* located in the same complex, which also contained a library, medical facilities, a hostel for travelers, and a factory for weaving garments.[7] The Talmud Torah soon acquired an international reputation, attested in the writings of contemporary rabbis, and eventually began to attract foreign students from as far as Poland. It provided for other communities a model of centralized education open to appropriate legislation.[8]

Central to the curriculum was of course the study of Talmud and the burgeoning literature of halakhic texts – commentaries, codes, and responsa – as well as probing analysis of biblical books and *aggadah*, the non-halakhic components of the rabbinic literature. Especially in Salonika and Istanbul, there were also opportunities for broader study of philosophical material, including works by non-Jewish authors.[9] It is unclear whether, as one scholar asserts, the Salonika community "supported a school for secular studies, where medicine, astronomy, and natural sciences were taught."[10] But the achievements of a rabbi such as Solomon Levi, whose sermons are replete with references to Aristotelian works and even to his own commentary on two of them (see below), indicate that such material was certainly not alien to the worldview of scholars and of those who listened to and learned from them.[11]

While the intellectual attainments of these Jewish centers probably eclipsed those of their Muslim neighbors, it is unclear how they would have compared with the elite levels of European Christian society. A German visitor in the middle of the sixteenth century was not impressed by the level of most Jewish doctors, with the exception of a few who were

[6] See Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 18 vols. (Philadelphia, 1962–83) XVIII, 38, 55–6; Rivkah Cohen, *Kushta-Saloniki-Patras* (Tel Aviv, 1984), 100–9.

[7] Minna Rozen, "The Ottoman Jews," in *Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. III (Cambridge, 2006), 256–71, esp. 267; Goodblatt, *Jewish Life in Turkey*, 20–1.

[8] Salo W. Baron, *The Jewish Community*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1942), I, 348–9; A. S. Amarilio, "Ḥevrat Talmud Torah ha-Gadol Ba-Saloniki," *Sefunot* 13 (*Sefer Yavan* 3) (1971–8), 276; responsa cited in Asaf, *Mekoro*, III, 35–9; Hacker, "Intellectual Activity," 108–9.

[9] See the review of this in Hacker, "Intellectual Activity," 116–20.

[10] Avigdor Levy, *The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, 1992), 38; cf. Hacker's reference to Joseph Taitazak having "headed a school of philosophers": "Intellectual Activity," 118.

[11] Solomon Levi wrote about his own philosophical study, which he recommended to others, in considerable detail: see texts cited in Hacker, "Intellectual Activity," 123–4.

highly distinguished. Many of them, he wrote, had no knowledge of Greek or Latin, and knew nothing beyond Hebrew and Arabic translations of Galen.[12]

The evidence about the formal study of Kabbalah in Salonika and Istanbul is extremely limited before the late sixteenth century, although Solomon Molcho, the Portuguese *converso* who returned to Judaism and had a brief, dazzling career before reaching a tragic end, apparently became educated in kabbalistic material while in Salonika. Many illustrious immigrants who created the flourishing kabbalistic center in sixteenth-century Safed may well have begun their study of Kabbalah, and even their creative work in the field, while living in the intellectual centers of the Empire.[13]

Safed became home to one of the greatest concentrations of Jewish scholars and mystics in the world. But this was not a community that focused exclusively on an elite group without concern for the education of the rest of the population. An immigrant who arrived in 1602 found a system of schools with 400 pupils and students, taught by some 20 teachers whose salary was paid not by the families of the students but by wealthy Jews in Istanbul. In addition, study groups for adults followed the morning and evening worship services, with classes studying different topics, including the Bible, Mishnah, Halakhah with Rashi and Tosafot, *Ein Ya'akov* (on the non-halakhic components of the Talmud), Maimonides, and Zohar, so that "not a single person goes out in the morning to his work or business without having studied something in the set curriculum, and the same in the evening, and on Sabbath day, everyone comes to hear the sermon delivered by the sages."[14]

ITALY

Like the Ottoman Empire, Italy had a native Jewish population and established communities of Ashkenazic immigrants before the wave of refugees from the Iberian Peninsula reached Italian shores. Unlike the

[12] Hans Dernschwam, in Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World* (Cincinnati, 1999), 473. For the role of Salonikan Jews in the spread of astronomical knowledge, see Avner Ben-Zaken, "Bridging the Networks of Trust: Practicing Astronomy in Late Sixteenth-Century Salonika," *Jewish History* 23, 4 (2009), 343–61.

[13] For a recent discussion, see Joseph Hacker, "Le-Toledot Limmud ha-Kabbalah u-Tefutsatah be-Saloniki ba-Me'ah ha-Tet-Zayin," in Rachel Elior and Peter Schäfer, eds., *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought* (Tübingen, 2005), Hebrew texts 165*–180*.

[14] Letters of Solomon Shlomiel of Dresnitz, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, III, 27; cf. Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, 2003), 54–5.

Ottoman communities, the existing Italian communities were not culturally overwhelmed by the Sephardic arrivals.

There were several options for the education of boys. Local communities generally hired a tutor for the children of the poor. Those who could afford it would usually arrange for a tutor to come to their home, or to live there, with room and board as part of the contract. A common arrangement was for a child to be sent away to live with a wealthier relative, or to the home of a tutor in a different community.[15]

Instruction began before age 5, sometimes as early as 3, with exposure to the Hebrew language of the Pentateuch, parts of which were learned by memory and translated literally word for word into the vernacular Italian. Sections from other books of the Bible might follow. As soon as the child was ready, he was led to works of a legal character: the Mishnah and Maimonides's *Code of Jewish Law*. Study of the Talmud itself was made more difficult by the burning of printed texts in the middle of the sixteenth century, but exposure to talmudic material through Alfasi's abridgment often began before the child reached his ninth birthday.[16] There was no formal curriculum to be followed; the materials to be studied were chosen in accordance with traditions, modified by the predilections of the instructor. In addition to the standard texts, Abraham Farissol in Farrara taught grammar, composition of letters, delivery of sermons, and logic, though his social status, like that of most such teachers in community-sponsored schools, was not especially high.[17] The private tutor was generally more respected.

In some cases, the community rabbi played an important role, teaching students beyond the elementary level. David ibn Yahya, appointed rabbi of the Naples community in 1525, outlined his teaching responsibilities and his actual engagement in teaching in a letter written to colleagues: he was contractually obligated to teach Halakhah every morning, but he claims to have gone far beyond that minimum and taught grammar, poetry, and philosophical texts, responding to all questions that were asked, mornings, afternoons, and evenings.[18] Another letter, written by a tutor to the wealthy mother of the boy from Siena that he was educating together with several others, describes a rigorous daily schedule: up before daylight for three hours of Talmud study, then morning prayer and breakfast

[15] Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley, 1991), 126. [16] Ibid., 130–2.

[17] David Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew: The Life and Thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol* (Cincinnati, 1981), 16–17.

[18] Alexander Marx, "Glimpses of the Life of an Italian Rabbi in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century," *HUCA* 1 (1924), 617, 621; Asaf, *Mekorot*, II, 113–14; Robert Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy* (London, 1993), 147–50.

followed by additional Talmud study through the morning, and several additional hours in the evening. The afternoon was left free for grammar taught by a Christian instructor who came to the house.[19]

Leon Modena's autobiography reveals that he was taught by tutors from a very young age; indeed, he claims to have recited the Haftarah in the synagogue at 2½.[20] At the age of 9, he was sent to the home of his cousin in Ferrara for tutoring by rabbis. Each of the students would prepare a discourse on the weekly Torah lesson; they would then gather in the house of the rabbi on the Sabbath, and one would be chosen to deliver the sermon.[21] In this tutorial context, perhaps together with a few others, he studied music, writing (including letters), Latin, and poetry. He ceased studying with a regular teacher at age 13, and from that point became an autodidact; by 18, he began to give lessons in the Torah to others.[22]

The institutional context in which the highest level of study occurred was understood to be analogous to the Italian *academia* or *studium*, a meeting place for the learned, equivalent to a small university.[23] Elijah Capsali, who had studied in Italy in the first years of the sixteenth century, wrote a detailed account of the method of study in the Ashkenazic *yeshiva* headed by Judah Minz in Padua. Noteworthy is his emphasis on the scarcity of books.[24] According to Capsali, the only text in the *yeshiva* belonged to the Master, who would ask a series of questions and then engender lively discussion among the students, which he calls "pilpul ha-yeshiva," perhaps equivalent to an academic disputation in the Christian schools. Students would later transmit knowledge on an appropriate level to their own pupils. Capsali notes that there were other students, in addition to himself, who came from far away to study in the *yeshiva*.[25]

[19] Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 134; source in Asaf, *Mekorot*, IV, 20. Asaf understands "grammar" (written *grammatika* in the Hebrew text) to refer to the Italian language, Bonfil to Latin.

[20] Cf. Asaf, *Mekorot*, II, 114, where another Italian child is said to have read the Haftarah of *parashat Re'eh* in the synagogue at age 4½.

[21] Leon Modena, *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena's* Life of Judah, ed. Mark R. Cohen (Princeton, 1988), 85–6; Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 405–6; cf. Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 134, about a similar exercise on a topic of talmudic law three times per week.

[22] Modena, *Autobiography*, 86–7, 90.

[23] See Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities*, 18–19, citing texts in which *rashei yeshiva* is rendered in Latin as *presides academie*, and the *yeshiva* is compared to the *studium*.

[24] On the first printed tractates that would have been available in the *yeshiva*, see Marvin J. Heller, *Printing the Talmud: A History of the Earliest Printed Editions of the Talmud* (Brooklyn, 1992), 61, 77–87.

[25] See Asaf, *Mekorot*, II, 102–5; Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 136, and *Rabbis and Jewish Communities*, 21–2; and the discussion by Elhanan Reiner, "Temurot bi-Yeshivot

Not everyone was satisfied with the narrowness of the talmudic curriculum. A fascinating document dating from 1564 in Mantua provides a major source for the *paideia* of Italian Jewish intellectuals in the mid sixteenth century, following the burning of the Talmud at the order of Pope Julius III in 1553. The introduction to this text explicitly recognizes the achievements of Renaissance culture, producing a crisis for the Jewish self-image: "The peoples among whom we live are ever increasing in wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, and in all arts, but Israel alone is isolated, desolate, poor . . . Why should we be inferior to all other peoples who have scholarly institutions and places fit for instruction in law and the sciences?"[26]

In response, the author, David Provenzali, proposed a new institution – said to be inspired by the academies in the Land of Israel, but quite different in concept – where Jewish students could attain a high level of education in Jewish sources and in general culture. The curriculum was to include the Bible with rabbinic midrash and the newest commentaries, rabbinic law (though not directly from the Talmud), "the best Jewish philosophers," and the Hebrew language, including grammar and speech. The students were also to be taught "to speak in public and to preach before congregations."[27]

Alongside the Jewish material was to be instruction in Latin, "which is almost indispensable now in our country." Students should be able to write themes in Italian and Latin as well as in Hebrew. The Latin language opened up an entire new world of "scientific books dealing with logic, philosophy, and medicine," as well as mathematics, geography, and astrology. Instruction is to be provided by specialists in their own fields, "for it is manifestly impossible for one or two men to give adequately all the lectures we have suggested above."[28]

There is no evidence that this idea was ever implemented. Although small academies with curricula encompassing both Jewish texts and scientific subjects assuming knowledge of Latin were established by

Polin ve-Ashkenaz ba-Me'ot ha-Tet-Zayin ve-ha-Yod-Zayin," in Yisra'el Bartal, Chava Turnianski, and Ezra Mendelsohn, eds., *Ke-Minhag Ashkenaz u-Folin: Sefer Yovel le-Chone Shmeruk* (Jerusalem, 1993), 15–16, and comparing the description given by Nathan Hannover almost 150 years later: 37–44.

[26] David Provenzalo, in Jacob Rader Marcus and Marc Saperstein, *The Jews in Christian Europe* (Cincinnati, 2015), 563–4.

[27] See examples in Marc Saperstein, "Italian Jewish Preaching: An Overview," in David Ruderman, ed., *Preachers of the Italian Ghetto* (Berkeley, 1992), 28.

[28] Marcus and Saperstein, *The Jews in Christian Europe*, 567, 569; cf. Gianfranco Miletto, "The Teaching Program of David ben Abraham and his Son Abraham, Provenzali in its Historical-Cultural Context," in David Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri, eds., *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia, 2004), 127–48.

individuals,[29] the full vision of Provenzali would never be realized until centuries later. Its openness to the general culture based upon an uncompromising commitment to a strong Jewish identity leaves unresolved the question of whether it was fundamentally driven by an effort to foster integration into the wider Italian learned culture through its curriculum, or to safeguard the boundary lines of the Jewish community by diminishing the incentives to study in Christian universities.[30]

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The traditional institutions of formal Jewish education are well known: the *ḥeder* for primary education, and the talmudic academy (*yeshiva*) for higher levels. In many cases these were supplemented or even replaced by private tutorial, where the family was wealthy enough to pay for it; such tutors were often engaged to teach children the vernacular language or even Latin.

Ḥeder literally means "room," and indeed it was often nothing more than a room in the teacher's house, where children of different ages, learning levels, and abilities were grouped together. Most were private institutions, not officially funded or formally established by the community, which did play a role in oversight and supervision of teachers. Community regulations often set a limit on the number of students a teacher could teach, and the minimum number of hours that the teacher should be available to the pupils. Primary teachers of the Bible in Krakow were permitted to teach as many as forty children with two assistants.[31] Some communities also funded a primary school for children of those too indigent to pay for the *ḥeder*.[32]

Unlike the tutors hired by wealthier families, the teachers in these schools were neither well qualified nor well paid. With no training in pedagogical techniques, they tended to reproduce the environment they recalled from their own childhood. The position was generally filled by individuals who had a rudimentary education in Jewish texts but were unsuccessful in higher Jewish learning. It clearly was not a position that carried much prestige in the traditional Jewish society.[33]

[29] See David Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven, 1995), 258–9.

[30] Miletto, "Teaching Program," 147 n. 80.

[31] Ordinances of Krakow, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 101.

[32] For an overview, see Isidore Fishman, *The History of Jewish Education in Central Europe: From the End of the Sixteenth to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1944), 17–22, 43–4; Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1993), 160–1.

[33] See, for example, Robert Liberles, "On the Threshold of Modernity," in Marion A. Kaplan, ed., *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618–1945* (Oxford, 2005), 49–50.

Occasionally teachers attempted to organize and set standards for themselves. The Nikolsburg community of southern Moravia had a guild of teachers (*Ḥevra Kadish shel Melamedim*) that passed their own ordinances between 1676 and 1756 pertaining to qualifications for teachers, hours of instruction, payment of entrance fees and monthly dues, regulation of assistant teachers, and the number of advanced teachers who would be accepted from outside the community for a limited period of time. Qualifications included that the teacher be married for a minimum of two years and attain the title *Ḥaver* bestowed by the local rabbi.[34] This was, however, the rare exception to the generally disorganized character of the primary-level education.[35]

The curriculum began with the Pentateuch, translated mechanically word for word into the vernacular, with no systematic attempt to teach the grammar of the Hebrew language, or the meaning of the passage as a whole.[36] Studies proceeded each week in accordance with the Pentateuchal lesson read in the synagogue. The Talmud was introduced before mastery of the Bible, entailing a new language (Aramaic), also without instruction in its grammar or its technical terminology, and without a systematic progression from easier to more difficult material.

At around age 13, pupils moved into the second major educational institution: the *yeshiva*, where the curriculum was focused entirely on talmudic study. Within a year or so, students deemed to be without sufficient talent to excel were removed from the program and encouraged to learn a trade as an apprentice. A Polish rabbi complained in 1630 that most Jews didn't understand the Hebrew of prayers they said every day; this applied to Jewish males, and all the more so to females.[37]

The upper levels of the *yeshiva* were the glory of the east European educational program; through most of our period, they were among the pre-eminent in the Jewish world. Talmudic study might be focused on total mastery of all the issues arising from a small number of successive pages of a tractate, or on a discrete complex legal issue (*sugya*) that required study of all places where the topic was addressed. The most demanding and controversial form of advanced study was the system of *pilpul* and *ḥillukim*.

[34] Fishman, *The History of Jewish Education*, 53, 56–7, 59.

[35] For one of many descriptions of this lack of supervision of teachers, and the resulting chaos of pupils running wild, see the 1682 Ordinance of Posnan, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 115, para. 5.

[36] Ephraim Luntshitz, '*Ammudei Shesh*, in Asaf, *Mekorot* I, 61; cf. Israel Bettan, *Studies in Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati, 1939), 297.

[37] Edward Fram, *Ideals Face Reality: Jewish Law and Life in Poland, 1550–1655* (Cincinnati, 1997), 50 n. 8.

This mode of intense textual analysis became firmly established in the early sixteenth century at Shalom Shakhna's academy in Lublin. It was justified as an exercise that not only probed the profundities of the Talmud but also honed the analytical capacities and sharpened the intellects of those who were capable of mastering its intricacies.[38]

At the other extreme of the social hierarchy from the *melamed* in the *ḥeder*, the head of the *yeshiva* was perceived as the embodiment of the highest values of traditional Jewish society. There was no formal license for this position; it was held by an individual whose reputation for scholarship inspired the respect of other rabbis. Some also served as the community rabbi, who was expected to adjudicate specific halakhic issues that arose among its members and to deliver sermons at fixed times during the year and special important occasions. Other *yeshiva* heads held a position independent of the community rabbi, and were free to devote themselves entirely to scholarship and the highest level of teaching.

As Jacob Katz has noted, the capacity of the *yeshiva* to attract students from afar gave it a function transcending the individual community. Advanced students from neighboring or distant cities would be in residence for a good part of the year, their responsibilities entirely focused on intense study resulting in progress that would satisfy the *yeshiva* head. They were supported by contributions from wealthy local Jews, some of whom undoubtedly hoped to find talented and pious husbands for eligible daughters. At some point in their study, they might be deemed eligible for rabbinical ordination, though some of the very best students bypassed such ordination and devoted themselves to pure scholarship at the highest level, in the hope that they might become *yeshiva* heads themselves.[39]

CRITICISM AND ATTEMPTED REFORM

Some of the leading intellectual figures of central and east European Jewry expressed deep dissatisfaction with its educational system, at both its lowest and its highest levels. The best-known of these critics was the chief rabbi of Prague in the 1590s, Leib ben Bezalel (Maharal). His trenchant critique of the existing system was based on the insistence that it revealed no

[38] For an overview of the Polish academies and their style of study, see Fishman, *The History of Jewish Education*, 102–9 (note the description of the *ḥiluk* method by Nathan Hannover cited on p. 104); Moses A. Shulvass, "The Story of Torah Study in Eastern Europe," in *Between the Rhine and the Bosporus* (Chicago, 1964); Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *Hagut ve-Hanhagah: Hashkafoteha ha-Ḥevratiyot shel Yehudei Polin be-Shalhei Yemei ha-Beinayim* (Jerusalem, 1959), 164–72.

[39] Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, 164–5.

sensitivity to the way young people learn.[40] Instead, he proposed a curriculum based on the psychological and intellectual development of the children. The Bible should be presented in meaningful units, including the entire Pentateuch but not limited to it. The Hebrew language should be taught not simply through rote translation of words, but with its grammar.[41] At age 10, children could be introduced to the Mishnah; at age 15 to Gemara, with its more rigorous dialectic.[42]

Maharal had little use for the most popular form of advanced talmudic study known as *pilpul* or (in its extreme form) *ḥiluk*. In a fierce polemic against this mode of study, he wrote, "Let them not say that *pilpul* sharpens the minds; it only makes one foolish and ignorant . . . It would be better to learn carpentry or another trade, or to sharpen the mind by playing chess."[43] Several generations later, Berekhiah Berakh claimed that the current fashion of high-level talmudic study – a fanciful linking of totally unconnected matters – was indeed one of the *causes* of the pogroms of 1648–9![44]

Maharal claimed that his proposals were a return to a traditional mode of education which had been abandoned in favor of sterile intellectual games intended not to probe but to impress. His campaign for reform applied to all levels of education, including voluntary societies to be established in Prague where one chapter of the Mishnah would be studied by adults each day.[45] Yet Maharal believed that his efforts at reform – which extended beyond his own realm to include the lands of Poland and

[40] Maharal of Prague, *Tiferet Yisrae'el*, ch. 56, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 49; *Derekh Hayyim*, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 50; Marcus and Saperstein, *The Jews in Christian Europe*, 443–7.

[41] One of the first books intended to teach Hebrew grammar to children, published in Prague in 1597 and Krakow in 1598, had approbations from Maharal and Mordecai Jaffe, who encouraged the author to publish the book after having observed his success in teaching its content to 7-year-old children: Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 62–3.

[42] Maharal of Prague, *Gur 'Aryeh, Va-'Eṯhanan*, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 46. Cf. also the material from Ephraim Luntshitz in Bettan, *Studies in Jewish Preaching*, 296–8.

[43] *Tiferet Yisrae'el*, ch. 56, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 49; *Derekh Hayyim*, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 51); Byron Sherwin, *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent: The Life and Works of Judah Loew of Prague* (Rutherford, NJ, 1982), 172–80. Luntschitz and many other leading rabbis into the eighteenth century were also deeply critical of this method; see sources in Fishman, *History of Jewish Education*, 105–8; *Ammudei Shesh*, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 63; Ya'ir Ḥayyim Bacharach, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 127. Nisson E. Shulman, *Authority and Community: Polish Jewry in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1986), 88–90, characterized *ḥiluk* as a "casuistic perversion of *pilpul*."

[44] Berekhiah Berakh, *Zera Berakh* (Amsterdam, 1662), Author's Introduction to part II, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, I, 113–14. For an overview of the nature and role of *pilpul* and the bitter controversy over it, see Reiner, "Temurot bi-Yeshivot Polin ve-Ashkenaz," 9–80.

[45] See Joseph Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller: Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* (Oxford, 2004), 69.

Russia – were a dismal failure. He may have had some influence on individuals, but not on the system.

DRAMATIC CHANGES

Dramatic changes in education were indeed introduced into Jewish communities in the late eighteenth century with an unprecedented new idea: a modern education promoting integration into the general society to be made available to all Jews. For the first time, governments of host countries began to take an interest in the content of Jewish education. The first example of legislation pertaining directly to this may have been Maria Theresa's 1771 statute for the Jewish community of the free port of Trieste, mandating that communal leaders ensure that children learn not only Hebrew but also "the Italian and German languages current in the land."[46] Systematic attention to Jewish primary schools would be reflected eleven years later in Joseph II's Edict of Toleration, which stated as a major goal "to make the Jewish nation useful and serviceable to the State, mainly through better education and enlightenment of its youth," by enabling Jewish children to study secular subjects in Christian schools, and by establishing Jewish "Normal Schools."[47]

What has been called the "first modern school in the Jewish world" – the *Freischule* for children of poor Jews – was established in Berlin in 1778. Financed by wealthy families, its curriculum included languages, science, and representative works of European culture. With a traditional Jewish education offered in the mornings, the afternoon curriculum had the breadth of the sixteenth-century Italian proposal, though on an elementary level, and included reading and writing in German and French.[48] Other comparable schools followed soon after in Breslau (1791), Dessau (1799), Seesin (1801), Frankfurt (1804), and Wolfenbüttel (1807).[49]

Such schools obviously generated a demand for special books appropriate for a new curriculum. The first of this kind was published in 1779: *Lesebuch für jüdischer Kinder*, written by David Friedländer and Moses Mendelssohn. Though not initially influential, it has been described as a "symbolic cultural

[46] Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, 1999), 52–3, 100.

[47] See the text in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1995), 36–40.

[48] Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2004), 107–10.

[49] David Jan Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780–1840* (Detroit, 1999), 126; Steven M. Lowenstein, "The Beginning of Integration, 1780–1870," in Marion A. Kaplan, ed., *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618–1945* (Oxford, 2005), 123.

turning point," the first book intended for children in a modern non-religious Jewish school, with a mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish content.[50]

Soon after appeared the most contentious attack upon traditional Jewish education, published in 1782 by Naphtali Herz Wessely. His strongest critique was of what was *not* included in the traditional curriculum, insisting that Jews needed a proper understanding of "the ways of morality and good character, civility and clear, graceful expression" – all of which was totally neglected by the Jews of Germany and Poland. In addition, a proper education had to include knowledge of history, geography, and the natural sciences.[51] Following the French Revolution and the Emancipation of French Jewry, Berr Isaac Berr deplored the state of Jewish education, enthusiastically endorsed Wessely as a model, and insisted that the first priority was for French Jews to master the French language.[52]

Not unexpectedly, the rabbinic reaction to this publication was fierce. Ezekiel Landau, chief rabbi of Prague, accepted the need for Jews to learn proper German, but castigated Wessely in a pre-Pesach sermon, saying that "an evil man has arisen from our own people and has brazenly asserted that the Torah is not at all important."[53] Rabbi David Tevele of Lissa/Leszno, outraged that someone lacking rabbinic credentials would enter this debate, let loose with an even stronger diatribe from the pulpit, concluding that he was gratified to learn that in Vilna they burned Wessely's book in the streets.[54] And Pinhas Hurwitz, the rabbi of Frankfurt, gave a sermon a few months later ferociously criticizing not only Wessely and his tract, but the entire movement of Haskalah.[55] This was the beginning of a *Kulturkampf* over Jewish education that would continue into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

EDUCATION FOR FEMALES

Despite occasional claims that the Jewish community was unique in providing "universal" education, it should be clear that the discussion above applies only to males.

[50] Zohar Shavit, "David Friedländer and Moses Mendelssohn publish the *Lesebuch für jüdische Kinder*," in Sander Gilman and Jack Zipes, eds., *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Culture in Germany, 1096–1996* (New Haven, 1997), 68–74.
[51] Wessely, in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World*, 70–4.
[52] Berr, in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World*, 120.
[53] Landau, in Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 365–6.
[54] Tevele, in *The Jew in the Modern World*, 74–6.
[55] Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 157.

Some girls in Italy were properly educated, but they were clearly the exceptions, from wealthy families. While in Rome and Pisa in the mid-1520s, David Reubeni noted a wise woman who taught small girls, and also talented and pious young women who studied the Hebrew Bible – a phenomenon he singled out for special mention.[56] Records of the salaries provided to tutors for daughters of wealthy Italian Jews in the late sixteenth century reveal that this was indeed a priority in certain wealthy families.[57] It was conceivable that an exceptionally talented girl might be given permission by a rabbi to study the Talmud (despite traditions that made this potentially problematic), as a collection of epistolary models contains an exchange requesting and receiving such permission.[58] But the opportunities for an education comparable to that received by boys with similar intellectual abilities were extremely limited.

While male illiteracy in the seventeenth-century Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam was virtually non-existent, female illiteracy averaged about 30 percent. This was less than half the percentage for the general population, but was a significant proportion of the women, and for girls from poor families, the illiteracy rate was considerably higher.[59]

In Germany, some girls from Nikolsburg and Runkel were able to attend primary school.[60] Many acquired enough facility in Hebrew to follow the prayer book, along with a reading knowledge of Yiddish. They then continued their education from Yiddish books especially intended for women: Bible translations, discussions of ethical principles, and the religious duties women were expected to fulfil.[61] Even a text written by a woman (Rebecca bat Meir of Ticktin) that is highly sympathetic to women emphasizes the role of mothers in enhancing the education for their sons. The daughter, we are told, "can help the mother in the education of the sons that will be born later; that is why every woman should make an effort to educate her daughter in good deeds."[62]

One of the most important sources for our knowledge of female education is the seventeenth-century memoir by Glückel of Hameln. That she was indeed capable of writing her own memoir reveals a relatively high level in Jewish society, but few other works by contemporary Jewish women are

[56] D. Reubeni, *Sippur David ha-Re'uveni*, ed. A. Z. Aescoli, 2nd edn. (Jerusalem, 1993), 39, 57; Asaf, *Mekorot*, II, 112–13; cf. Elkan Nathan Adler, ed., *Jewish Travelers* (New York, 1931), 275.

[57] Asaf, *Mekorot*, II, 121. [58] Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 132–3.

[59] Bodian, *Jews of the Portuguese Nation*, 88–9; cf. Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 101, 203, 351–2 n. 211. Some daughters of wealthy Jews were instructed by Dutch tutors: Bodian, *Jews of the Portuguese Nation*, 285.

[60] Fishman, *History of Jewish Education*, 118–19; Liberles, "On the Threshold of Modernity," 49.

[61] Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 50 n. 8. [62] *Meineket Rivka*, in Asaf, *Mekorot*, IV, 46.

comparable. In addition to Yiddish, she was probably able to read high German.[63] In one especially intriguing vignette, Glückel's step-sister was able to save her father from being swindled because she understood French and could speak Hebrew, in addition to playing the piano.[64] Thus, girls of wealthy families were tutored in other languages and skills that were thought to make them attractive to suitors.

In his charter of 1750, Frederick the Great provided that two (married) teachers for girls were permitted to reside in Berlin and five other cities, in addition to the two employees of the synagogue-school for boys.[65]

HOMILETICS

A broad spectrum of Jewish leaders delivered sermons. Some of them were rabbinic scholars of the highest level, respected as authorities in Jewish law, who at the same time cared deeply about preaching and exhibited considerable homiletical talent. There were also rabbis who served congregations in a rabbinic capacity, including as teachers of the Talmud and halakhic authorities for their own community, but were not known primarily as outstanding Talmudists or widely consulted as legal experts. Many of them, especially in the Sephardic Diaspora, preached every week, and in some cases even more frequently. In communities of central and eastern Europe, where the rabbi or *yeshiva* head preached to the entire people on relatively rare occasions, another specialist was often appointed with special responsibility to deliver a sermon each Sabbath, usually in the afternoon before the statutory afternoon prayer.[66]

Occasionally, in the absence of properly qualified rabbis, educated laymen delivered sermons to the congregation. Finally, there were itinerant preachers on the margins of Jewish society in central and eastern Europe, traveling from community to community in the hope of receiving a fee for delivering a sermon in a significant synagogue.[67] The burgeoning number

[63] Natalie Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 23–8.

[64] *The Life of Glückel of Hameln, 1646–1724*, ed. Beth-Zion Abraham (London, 1962), 12–20.

[65] Marcus and Saperstein, *The Jews in Christian Europe*, 260.

[66] Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 29–30. On the controversy over paying a preacher to deliver sermons on the Sabbath, see ibid., 48–9. The position of preacher in mid-seventeenth-century Krakow was held by Berekhiah Berakh, on whom see Ben-Sasson, *Hagut ve-Hanhagah*, 50–1, 194–6.

[67] M. Piekarz, *Bi-Yemei Tsemiḥat ha-Ḥasidut: Megamot Rayaniyot be-Sifrut Derush u-Musar* (Jerusalem, 1978), 169–70.

of such figures in early modern Poland led communities to try to exert control by requiring formal authorization from a responsible rabbinic figure, ratified by the city elders, before the visitor would be permitted to preach, an effort to guard against the potential spread of heretical teachings or the dispensing of ignorance.[68]

Delivered in the vernacular, the sermon was accessible to all members of the community, not just those able to read and understand Hebrew – from young teenagers to the elderly, from those with minimal education to renowned talmudic scholars, women along with men. Of course, some sermons were pitched at an extremely high level, which would have excluded most in a general audience. But the ideal was to recognize the diversity of the congregation and include in the sermon at least some material that would be comprehensible to all, along with some that would make demands on many of the listeners, and even a few passages that would impress the scholars.[69]

The expectation was certainly that everyone would learn something new. If the sermon merely repeated familiar material, discontent was readily expressed.[70] Sometimes this impulse drove preachers to excessive ingenuity in trying to present novel interpretations of biblical and rabbinic passages, and that produced a different kind of criticism.[71] But the homiletical ideal remained innovation of a moderate sort: taking a verse, a rabbinic passage, even a phrase, that everyone had heard many times, and presenting it in a manner that illuminated it in a new way.

As in the Middle Ages, the sermon remained a vehicle for the diffusion – often in a simplified form – of philosophical ideas, and increasingly for kabbalistic teachings. In this way, the preacher continued in the early modern period to serve as a mediator between elite and popular culture.[72] Citing gentile authors as a source of truth from the pulpit was not above

[68] See, on this, Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 46–8, and the powerful defense of itinerant preachers as God's emissaries, 424–7.

[69] In his survey of Jewish literature in late sixteenth-century Poland, Jacob Elbaum concluded that "the sermon served in this period, as in generations before and after, as the supreme implement of popular education, in addition to the other societal needs that it fulfilled": Elbaum, *Petiḥut ve-Histagrut: ha-Yetsirah ha-Ruḥanit-Ḥevratit be-Folin u-ve-Artsot Ashkenaz be-Shalhe ha-Me'ah ha-Shesh Esreh* (Jerusalem, 1990), 247.

[70] Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 55 n. 31; Hacker, "Intellectual Activity," 98.

[71] As well as criticizing the educational system, Maharal had strong words of criticism for this type of preaching; see the text translated in Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 399–400, and cf. the similar criticism by Luntschitz in ibid., 403, and Ben-Sasson, *Hagut ve-Hanhagah*, 171.

[72] See, on this, Robert Bonfil, "Preaching as Mediation Between Elite and Popular Cultures: The Case of Judah del Bene," in Ruderman, ed., *Preachers of the Italian Ghetto*, 67–88. On the background, see Saperstein, "Sermons as Evidence for the

controversy, and occasionally a preacher confronted strong opposition for a formulation that struck some listeners as crossing a boundary line. David del Bene's sermons as a young man in Mantua, which allegedly included references to mythological names including "quella santa Diana," aroused a firestorm of protest in 1598 to the point of threatened excommunication, forcing the preacher to back down.[73] In 1703, David Nieto aroused a similar conflict, originally within his own London Sephardic congregation but eventually including external rabbinic authorities, by a sermon that appeared to endorse the Spinozist identification of God with nature.[74] Philosophy and science were viewed by some preachers, as well as some of those in their congregations, as dangerous.[75] Yet, especially in lands of the Mediterranean basin, the openness to external material in sermons is striking.

At the beginning of our period, we find Isaac Karo (1458–1535), originally from Toledo, who, it seems, left Portugal in 1497 at age 39 and spent the rest of his life in the Ottoman Middle East, teaching and preaching in Istanbul and Magnesia before apparently settling in Damascus.[76] He included abundant philosophical material in his sermons, some of a rather technical nature – for example, discussing the doctrines of the soul held by Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, ibn Sina, Abu Bakr (ibn Bajjah) and ibn Rushd.

Two generations later, Solomon Levi revealed similarly wide knowledge of both Jewish and non-Jewish literature, and little reluctance to incorporate its fruits into his weekly preaching. Especially striking are his specific references to various works of Aristotle (*Ethics, Physics, Heavens*), to his own commentary on the *Ethics*, and to "my great book, my commentary on the *Physics*, called *Shama Shelomah*: it can be read there."[77] Also

Popularization of Philosophy in Fifteenth-Century Spain," in *"Your Voice Like Ram's Horn": Themes and Texts in Traditional Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati, 1996), 75–87.

[73] See, e.g., David Kaufmann, "The Dispute about the Sermons of David del Bene of Mantua," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 8 (1896), 513–24; Moshe Idel, "Judah Moscato: A Late Renaissance Jewish Preacher," in Ruderman, ed., *Preachers of the Italian Ghetto*, 41–66, esp. 45. Del Bene later served as rabbi in Ferrara for some thirty-six years and was consulted as a legal authority.

[74] Israel Solomons, "David Nieto and Some of His Contemporaries," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 12 (1928–31), 1–101, esp. 10–17; Jakob J. Petuchowski, *The Theology of Haham David Nieto* (New York, 1970), 15–17.

[75] Cf. statements cited from David del Bene's son Judah del Bene by Bonfil in "Preaching as Mediation," 76–7; also Isaac Barzilay, *Between Reason and Faith: Anti-Rationalism in Italian Jewish Thought, 1250–1650* (The Hague, 1967), 211.

[76] See the Introduction by Shaul Regev to *Derashot R. Yitzhak Karo* (Ramat Gan, 1995), 9–10, 15–16.

[77] Solomon Levi, *Divrei Shelomoh* (Venice, 1596), 80d, 308d, cf. 22a, 78d.

intriguing is a reference from the pulpit to the new astronomers who repudiate the views of the ancients based on their own observation.

Judah Moscato of Mantua defended the citation of gentile writers with the familiar claim that the Greeks received their philosophical enlightenment from the ancient Hebrews, so that by citing them we were just recovering our own insights that had become lost. To the Aristotelian and Arabic works cited by other preachers, Moscato adds frequent references to Platonic dialogues.[78]

The use of kabbalistic material in sermons intended for the entire congregation was a related yet distinct issue. An enormous controversy raged in the middle of the sixteenth century over the printing of the Zohar at Mantua, 1558–60.[79] Even before printing, passages from the Zohar were cited by preachers as if it were simply a book of rabbinic midrash, which it resembles formally.[80] There was strong opposition, however, to divulging the esoteric doctrines of the Zohar and other kabbalistic writings to those without suitable preparation. But after the Zohar had become widely available in print, the restraints diminished. By the middle of the seventeenth century, we find a Polish compendium of quotations including many from various kabbalistic sources, and kabbalistic material (including the newer Lurianic Kabbalah) in the sermons of at least one important Polish preacher.[81]

In addition to what had been considered esoteric doctrines, the pulpit was used for the dissemination of more popular teachings that may have had their origins in the mystical tradition. A striking example is the doctrine of reincarnation, as we see in a eulogy delivered by one of the most renowned preachers in the Ottoman Empire during the late seventeenth century: Elijah ha-Kohen of Izmir. This doctrine – that the soul can be returned to this world in the body of another human being, an animal, or even as a vegetable or fruit – is integrated into the exegesis of traditional Jewish texts (primarily the Book of Job), and illustrated by the effective use of dramatic narrative vignettes.[82] It is difficult to dismiss reincarnation as

[78] Moscato, *Nefutsot Yehudah* (Warsaw, 1871) – for example: Timaeus, Sermon 8, 17d; Phaedo, Sermon 35, 95c–d); and "the Platonists," Sermon 33, 88d. On Moscato's Platonism, see Barzilay, *Between Faith and Reason*, 172–6.

[79] Isaiah Tishbi, "Ha-Pulmus 'al Sefer ha-Zohar ba-Me'ah ha-Tet-Zayin be-Italyah," *Perakim* 1 (1967), 131–82.

[80] E.g. Joseph Garçon and Joseph ben Ḥayyim of Benevento: see Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 216 n. 57.

[81] See ibid., 286, 288, 292–3, 299, on Israel of Belzyce. Contrast the bitter complaint of Berekhiah Berakh cited in Moshe Rosman, "Innovative Tradition: Jewish Culture in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth," in David Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York, 2002), 548.

[82] See the full text in Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 301–26.

"not a Jewish teaching" when one encounters it as central to the eulogy by a celebrated preacher for a renowned scholar.

A second major role for the rabbi/preacher was as guardian of standards of proper Jewish behavior. He shared this function with the lay leadership of the communities – the *parnasim* ("regents" or "wardens"), whose role it was to enact local or even regional ordinances prohibiting violation of traditional norms and to punish those who refused to accept the mandated constraints. The rabbi and the lay leaders were often (but not always) on the same side regarding such issues: the preacher could, through his sermons, bring to the attention of the congregation violations that he considered especially serious, providing an argument rooted in traditional texts, while the non-rabbinic leaders would attempt to implement the rebuke through enforceable regulations.

Early modern preachers clearly did not content themselves with addressing failures in the ritual behavior of their people in the synagogue and in their homes. Such problems were, in a sense, easier, since there was a broad consensus within the society that Jews should pray at the regularly scheduled times, avoid eating non-kosher foods, and observe the Sabbath scrupulously. There was less of a consensus about behavior in the realm of business affairs. This discrepancy is recognized and firmly repudiated by Azariah Figo in seventeenth-century Pisa:

> If a group of Jews were to be seen going to a gentile butcher and were then seen publicly eating pig or other forbidden meat, they would be stoned by all, although this entails only one negative prohibition, for which the punishment is lashes. Yet here we see those who lend money on interest, which involves six transgressions for the lender, as well as others for the borrower, the guarantor, the witnesses, and the scribe, and all are silent.

This is a revealing statement about the distance between communal consensus about unacceptable behavior and the logic of the Halakhah as articulated by its recognized spokesman. Figo continues to register a complaint about merchants who undertake a complicated exchange contract or *cambio*, governed by technical laws that require extensive knowledge of Halakhah: "My quarrel with them is this: Why don't they consult with experts in these matters, who can provide them with proper guidance?"[83] Here we sense an awareness that rabbis may be losing control over an important area of Jewish life.[84]

[83] Azariah Figo, *Binah le-'Ittim*, Sermon 10, 33d; see Saperstein, "Italian Jewish Preaching," 31–2; Bettan, *Studies in Jewish Preaching*, 239.

[84] More than a century later, Jonathan Eybeschütz made a similar point: *Ya'arot Devash*, in Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 333. And cf. also Ezekiel Landau, *Derushei ha-Tselah*, in Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 137, 139–40.

The realm of sexual mores was similarly fraught with anguish for the preachers. Thus, Jonathan Eybeschütz, aware of the slippery-slope progression from minor to severe offenses, points out that no one plans in advance to commit adultery with a married woman. The offense begins with a gaze, then turns to conversation, then to touching, and, eventually, the person who could never have imagined it is led to the most grievous sexual sin.[85] Even the carnival atmosphere prevalent in some synagogues (though not in his own) on the holiday of Simḥat Torah may lead to blatant immorality: "The youths of both sexes dance like rams and goats and foxes. Immorality bursts forth negating all the good achieved through the Days of Awe."[86]

Especially vexing were unmarried men and women going on unchaperoned walks together, and mixed dancing, about which Landau says "I have become exhausted protesting with the rabbinic court." Similarly futile protests were made about the practice of allowing married women to serve as servants in the homes of others.[87] Landau and his colleague Zerah Eidlitz both concede that the prohibition of *yiḥud* – unmarried men and women being alone together – was commonly ignored.

According to the Prague rabbis, babies born to unmarried women in a state of ritual impurity were an ongoing problem from the 1760s through the following decades. And there was the scandal of Jewish women publicly known to be of loose morals.[88] Strong and courageous as their rebukes sound, these powerful preachers seem to feel that they are fighting a losing battle against unprecedented forces beyond their control.

One additional category in the literature of rebuke pertains to a new phenomenon of the early modern period: options for Jewish leisure behavior inconsistent with the ethos of a fully traditional society. Some of the patterns criticized were not in themselves forbidden, but seemed wrong because they were innovations imitating the gentiles. Thus Eybeschütz complained, "Your parents never drank coffee or tea or such things. Nor did they use the tobacco plant . . ."[89] It was not only the behavior in coffee houses and taverns that exasperated the moralists, but the very fact that Jews were spending time there, even if only in idle conversation: a diversion of time that could have been spent in Torah study.[90]

The same critique applies to reading new kinds of literature. In a penitential sermon at Bordeaux in 1765, Ishac Mendes Belisario complained,

[85] Eybeschütz, *Ya'arot Devash*, 340. [86] Ibid., 345.
[87] Landau, *Derushei ha-Tselah*, in Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 133–4.
[88] See Zerah Eidlitz on Jewish prostitutes reported to the gentile authorities: *'Or la-Yesharim*, in Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 135, 136–7.
[89] Eybeschütz, *Ya'arot Devash*, 336.
[90] See the texts in Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 130–3.

"Oh, how regrettable it is to observe people assiduously reading romantic novels, fables, and what is even worse, how much time is wasted and lost when they try to understand mythology or genealogy, or the horrid vices of the gods in poetry."[91] In 1779, Eliezer Fleckeles of Prague rebuked those of his people who "show contempt for study and worship by gathering to hear about developments concerning human beings and livestock, current events which they call '*Zeitung*.'" The following year, it was the turn of Jews who plan during the month of Elul to watch the military exercises of army and cavalry; and in 1781, those who "squander their precious time at cards and billiards: an extremely serious prohibition."[92] Landau condemned Jews who attended comedies and comic operas in the bustling theatres of his city.[93]

Whether or not this literature of rebuke from the pulpit reveals a Jewish society already at a crisis point before the dramatic liberalization of Emancipation has been debated by historians. The behaviors criticized strike one as analogous to the critique of modern Orthodoxy today by the ultra-Orthodox. A generation or two later, the complaints of the Orthodox spokesmen about the breakdown of traditional Jewish society would be fundamentally different.

PUBLIC OCCASIONS

In addition to the normal calendar of annual holidays and life-cycle events, there were special occurrences affecting the community, for which a sermon was expected. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and before, these tended to be internal Jewish events. The deliverance of a community from danger, the dedication of a new public building or of an existing building for a sacred purpose, appointment to a new rabbinical position or the completion of a book would inspire celebratory sermons expressing appropriate gratitude to God. Events posing danger to the community, or incidents of violence or oppression, inspired sermons of ethical rebuke, calling upon the people to keep the faith, reform their behavior, and beseech God for forgiveness.[94]

[91] Ishac Mendes Belisario, "Sermón penitencial predicado en Bordeus . . . 6 Tysry 5526" (Amsterdam, 1765), 17 – translation by Martin H. Sable.

[92] Fleckeles, *Olat Tamid*, in Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 130–1.

[93] Landau, *Derushei ha-Tselah*, in Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 131.

[94] See Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 34–5, with examples in n. 22. See especially the dramatic sermon delivered at a spectacular community-wide event in Salonika by Almosnino: ibid., 217–39. Perhaps the most impressive example of preaching at the dedication of a new building was provided by the seven sermons delivered at the new synagogue of the Portuguese community in Amsterdam, dedicated in 1675: *Sermoẽs que*

A common preaching event was the death of a leading rabbinic figure or an important lay leader of the community. There is textual evidence for the eulogy from the medieval period, but it comes into its own in the sixteenth century.[95] At least one sermon would be given at the funeral itself, often in the cemetery, then others during a week of mourning as people gathered for statutory prayer, and then at a significant gathering held on the thirtieth day, concluding the most important period of mourning. Finally, individual rabbis would sometimes eulogize respected colleagues who lived in different locations when the news of the death reached them.[96] Obviously, having a well-known rabbi deliver a eulogy was an honor for the deceased; at the death of the very highest level of dignitary, the selection and order of preachers might reveal intense rivalries in a hierarchy of prestige.[97]

To cite just one example, Jonathan Eybeschütz, one of the most prominent talmudists of the eighteenth century, was a figure of enormous controversy. Accused of Sabbatean heresy by other leading rabbis of the time, when he died he was nevertheless buried with full honors in the section of the Altona cemetery reserved for rabbis. Eulogies were given not only at his funeral service, but also in Prague when the news arrived. Chief Rabbi Ezekiel, though expressing some ambivalence, extolled his extraordinary talents in many areas, including as "a great preacher, beyond peer . . . no one can deny the greatness of his message; his sermons of ethical rebuke would inspire many to repentance and tears." Zerah Eidlitz sang his praises without reserve.[98]

pregaraõ os doctos ingenios do K. K. de Talmud Torah . . ., ed. David de Castro Tartaz (Amsterdam, 1675).

95 See, on this, Horowitz, "Speaking of the Dead: The Emergence of the Eulogy among Italian Jewry of the Sixteenth Century," in Ruderman, ed., *Preachers of the Italian Ghetto*, 129–62, and, briefly on the medieval background, Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 368–9. For a more general treatment, see Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 277–9.

96 Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen (head of the rabbinic court in Venice) eulogized the Krakow rabbi and scholar Moses Isserles (a relative and ally) when news of his 1572 death arrived in Venice: see Horowitz, "Speaking of the Dead," 144–7. The following year, news of the death of Joseph Karo in Safed inspired several eulogies in Italy: Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 277.

97 For evidence of such tensions, see the autobiographical work of Isaac min ha-Levi'im, *Sefer Medaber Tahapukhot*, ed. Daniel Carpi (Tel Aviv, 1985), 48–50, 62–3, 74–6, 78–9, 82–3, 104–6. One of the most important such texts is the eulogy by Samuel Uceda for R. Isaac Luria of Safed, known as the "Ari" (acronym for "**A**shkenazi **R**abbi **I**saac"), published by Mordechai Pachter, *Mi-Tsefunot Tsefat: Meḥkarim u-Mekorot le-Toldot Tsefat ve-Hakhameha ba-Me'ah ha-Tet-Zayin* (Jerusalem, 1994), 39–68.

98 Landau, *Derushei ha-Tselah*, 46d, in Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 328; Eidlitz, *'Or la-Yesharim*, 12d; Sid Z. Leiman, "When a Rabbi is Accused of Heresy," in Daniel Frank and Matt Goldish, eds., *Rabbinic Culture and its Critics* (Detroit, 2008), 435–56, esp. 451.

In the eighteenth century, we begin to find evidence of Jewish preaching not just on internal Jewish occasions but also at gatherings in the synagogue generated by events of significance for the broader society. Often these occasions were announced by the crown or the government: a day of national fasting and prayer in the context of a serious danger, of mourning at the death of a sovereign, of celebration at the accession of a new king or the birth of a member of the royal family. It became important for Jewish communities to participate in such occasions, to express their own consciousness of being part of the body politic, and to demonstrate to their Christian neighbors that Jews identified with them by acting in their own synagogues in a manner similar to that of the Christians in their churches: with special prayers and a sermon addressing the specific situation.

One of the first examples of this is the Sephardic Hakham Isaac Nieto, preaching on a national fast day, February 6, 1756. The occasion was the catastrophic Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755, which, with the resulting tidal wave and fires, resulted in the nearly total destruction of the Portuguese capital. Nieto's was the first known Jewish sermon printed in English (though delivered in Spanish). Not surprisingly, unlike Voltaire, Nieto viewed the event as providential, addressed the theme of repentance in the face of God's judgment, and ended with a prayer for the king.[99]

The death of a monarch and the accession of a new king became an occasion for special Jewish preaching. In England, Ishac Mendes Belisario preached at a special service on November 29, 1760, in response to the death of George II; his text was published in Spanish and English translation.[100] When George III acceded to the throne, another service was held at Bevis Marks in a different atmosphere. This time it was Moses Cohen de Azevedo preaching a "Sermón de congratulación, sobre la felix y pacifica accesión de su Magestad el Rey George III."[101]

Perhaps the most dramatic of all such public gatherings stimulated by royalty was that of the Jewish community of Prague gathering in the Meisl Synagogue on December 10, 1780, to mourn in public the death of the Empress Maria Theresa. The entire leadership of the Jewish community was present, as were Christian notables representing both the government and the army. The eulogy, given by the chief rabbi of Bohemian Jewry, Ezekiel Landau, therefore presented a unique challenge, for Maria Theresa

[99] Cecil Roth, *Magna bibliotheca anglo-judaica* (London, 1937), 323. The London *Daily Observer* of February 7, 1756 reported on page 1 that "there were the greatest Crowds at most of the Churches, both in London and Westminster, ever known on any Occasion. The Jews Yesterday had public Worship at their several Synagogues."

[100] Roth, *Magna bibliotheca anglo-judaica*, 324.

[101] Azevedo's sermon was delivered on December 13, 1760, and published early in the following year.

is recognized by historians to have been perhaps the most anti-Jewish monarch of the eighteenth century, whose personal antipathy was expressed in policies that created considerable hardship for the Jews of her realm.[102]

Obviously, Landau could not launch into a diatribe against the deceased empress in front of such an audience. Yet the expressions of deep grief and effusively emotional praise, all of which appear to be genuine, come as a surprise, impelling us to re-evaluate assumptions about the nature of Jewish psychological attachment to the crown.[103] This address was published within a few months in three different versions: Hebrew, German in Hebrew characters, and German in German characters, a powerful testimony to the sense that, even before Emancipation, these Jews felt themselves to be an integral part of the broader society and that it was important for their Christian neighbors to know that the Jews shared in their grief.

Another new occasion for rabbinic preaching was the gathering within the synagogue on a day proclaimed by the government in connection with a war being fought by the nation. Jews were certainly aware that the countries in which they lived were engaged in military undertakings with potentially grave consequences. But there appears to be no evidence of Jews participating in national days either of rejoicing and thanksgiving, or of fasting, prayer, and repentance, while their Christian neighbors gathered in their churches, before the eighteenth century.[104]

Gad Freudenthal has recently discovered and published the text of a patriotic oration delivered in the Berlin Synagogue by the Prussian Rabbi David Fränckel on December 28, 1745: a celebration of an important Prussian victory over Austrian forces leading to the end of the second Silesian War, with the Treaty of Dresden, signed on December 25.[105] Twelve years later, in the context of the Seven Years' War, at least three other sermons were delivered on special occasions relating to the course of

[102] For more details on the empress's attitudes and policies toward Jews, see Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 446–7.

[103] Ibid., 447–50, and the Hebrew text with my translation, 454–84.

[104] A possible exception to this generalization: Aaron ben Hayyim ha-Cohen Perahyah delivered a sermon on 10 Iyar 5448 (May 10, 1688) before the entire Jewish community gathered in the Talmud Torah of Salonika on a day of fasting and prayers for forgiveness "because of the enemy's fleet that arrived near the coast facing the city to fight against": Amarilio, "Ḥevrat Talmud Torah ha-Gadol be-Saloniki," 276; the sermon was published sixty-five years later in Perahyah's *Bigdei Kehunah* (Salonika, 1753), Sermon 34, beginning 111. I am unable to determine whether this day of fasting and prayer had been declared by governmental authorities and was observed by Muslim neighbors, or whether it was solely the initiative of the Jewish community.

[105] Gad Freudenthal, "Ein symbolischer Anfang der Berliner Haskala: Veitel Ephraim, David Fränckel, Aron Gumpertz und die patriotische Feier in der Synagogue am 28. Dezember 1745," *Judaica* 61 (2005), 193–251.

battle. The third is known as the "Peace Sermon," delivered on March 12, 1763, in celebration of the Peace of Hubertusburg, which ended the war; while delivered by R. Aron Mosessohn, it is well established that Mendelssohn wrote it for this purpose.[106] Rarely before had the battles between gentile nations become a matter of internal Jewish concern in a context devoid of any messianic speculation.

During the same war, at least two sermons were delivered in England by the Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Hirschel Levin; the texts were not published and remain in a manuscript collection.[107] The second, on a day of national celebration following a military victory, explores the issue of the propriety of rejoicing at the destruction of fellow human beings in war:

> If God did not want to destroy those pagan nations that lived in antiquity, who did not believe in God or His salvation at all . . . how much more is this true for the nations among whom we, the people of Israel, find refuge, who treat us with kindness and mercy, who are religious and act in accordance with the values of truth, justice and peace.[108]

The earliest published sermon by a Sephardic English preacher responding to a war-time situation was delivered by Moses Cohen de Azevedo on February 16, 1759, a day of General Fast in the midst of the Seven Years' War; the text was translated by the author for publication. The preacher notes military successes during the past year in America, the East Indies, and Europe; following a long discussion of 1 Samuel 7, he concludes with a final prayer for "glorious victories by sea and land."[109] What may be the earliest known Jewish sermon delivered in English on the American continent – by Joseph Jeshurun Pinto at New York's Shearith Israel Congregation on August 15, 1763 – was occasioned by a day of thanksgiving proclaimed by the civil authorities of New York following the peace treaty that ended the French and Indian War.[110]

[106] Gad Freudenthal, "Rabbi David Fränckel, Moses Mendelssohn, and the Beginning of the Berlin Haskalah: Reattributing a Patriotic Sermon (1757)," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 1 (2007), 3–33, esp. 8, 20.

[107] Jewish Theological Seminary of America MS R 79 (Adler 1248).

[108] A translation of the first sermon was published in Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800*, 346–58.

[109] Moses Cohen de Azevedo, "Sermon Preached in the Portuguese Jews Synagogue on Friday, the 16th of February, 1759," translated from the Spanish (London, 1759), 2, 8, 22. Another wartime sermon published by Azevedo was delivered on December 13, 1776, at "Special Prayers for the Success of His Majesty's Arms in the Revolt of the American Colonies."

[110] Robert Z. Friedenberg, *"Hear O Israel": The History of American Jewish Preaching, 1654–1970* (Tuscaloosa, 1989), 5–6, with reference to the doctoral dissertation of Nathan Kaganoff.

Ezekiel Landau, who had offered many public prayers during the Seven Years' War, preached a thanksgiving sermon, soon published as a separate pamphlet, at a public gathering celebrating the victory against the Ottoman Turks of Joseph II's Austrian army in their siege of Belgrade.[111] Just a few months earlier, he had addressed twenty-five young Jews and their officers as they prepared to leave Prague for their basic training, recognizing the historic significance of this occasion when Jewish youth began to serve in the military forces of their sovereign and thereby to demonstrate their loyalty in a new manner as a result of changing conceptions of the relationship of Jews to the state.[112]

These sermons on public occasions provide evidence for the development of a new sense of patriotism among Jews toward the end of our period. It might, of course, be claimed that the prayers in the synagogue and the sermons delivered from the pulpits were intended for public relations and did not represent the true feelings of the Jews and their religious leaders. Nevertheless, while a text such as Landau's 1789 address to the new Jewish conscripts does reveal a measure of ambivalence, born of the awareness that military service will inevitably require compromises with the requirements of traditional Jewish observance, on the whole, these emotions of loyalty and patriotism seem genuine. Something new had occurred that would transform the Jewish experience in the modern period.

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[111] Landau, *Derush ha-Shevaḥ ve-ha-Hoda'ah al Hatslaḥat Adonenu ha-Kaisar* . . . (Prague, 1790); see Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 157–8.

[112] Saperstein, *"Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn,"* 157. On the halakhic response to the novelty of Jews being drafted to fight in wars between non-Jewish states, see Judith Bleich, "Military Service: Ambivalence and Contradiction," in Lawrence Schiffman and Joel B. Wolowelsky, eds., *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition* (New York, 2007), 415–76.

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CHAPTER 16

DIMENSIONS OF KABBALAH FROM THE SPANISH EXPULSION TO THE DAWN OF HASIDISM

LAWRENCE FINE

INTRODUCTION

While the history of Kabbalah has its beginnings in the twelfth century with the appearance of *Sefer ha-Bahir* in southern France, and evolved in its classical forms in Spain in the thirteenth, it was not until the beginning of the sixteenth century that kabbalistic literature and tradition became more widely disseminated in other parts of the Jewish world. The decisive reason for this was, without question, the dramatic events that took place on the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century. The expulsion of Spanish Jewry in 1492, and the forced mass conversion in 1497 of all Jews residing in Portugal – including the tens of thousands who had only recently fled to Portugal from Spain – had enormous consequences for the spread of Iberian Jewish culture, not the least of which was kabbalistic culture. The vast majority of Jews who managed to flee to other lands in the final years of the fifteenth century and early decades of the sixteenth migrated to North Africa, certain Italian city-states, and to the far reaches of the Ottoman Empire. The knowledge and practice of kabbalistic tradition were among the most important and influential dimensions of religious culture that these Jews brought with them. This produced one of the great ironies of early modern Jewish history. While tragic social and political events caused untold suffering, the exiles and migrations that resulted served to generate immense cultural ferment and creativity in the spheres of religious thought and practice. The fresh encounter between exceedingly large numbers of Iberian exiles and other Jewries, as well as with non-Jews, proved to be stimulating beyond measure. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the history of early modern Jewish mysticism.

Needless to say, a comprehensive survey of Jewish mysticism from the Spanish Expulsion forward is a project far beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, my intention is to identify and explore certain broad contours and dynamics, informed by some of the salient historical, literary, ideational,

ritual, and social dimensions of kabbalistic tradition, beginning with the sixteenth century. I wish to do so by employing several methodological perspectives.

First, in recent years Moshe Idel has vigorously argued for the importance of kabbalistic scholarship to more fully acknowledge and investigate the *distinctive* nature of kabbalistic life in different regions in the post-Expulsion period. As Idel argued,

> Though all the major centers of [post-Expulsion] Kabbalah depend upon the Spanish ones – the Catalonian and the Castilian – each developed in its own direction. They were influenced by a variety of factors, the most important of them being: what type of kabbalistic material arrived from Spain, directly or indirectly; the idiosyncratic nature of the kabbalists in a certain center, and last but not least, the cultural and other circumstances characteristic of a given center.[1]

The "circumstances characteristic of a given center" include, of course, broader cultural trends in which Jews found themselves participating, such as Renaissance and Baroque Italy, or, in the case of North African and Ottoman Jewries, an Islamic cultural environment. The present chapter is consistent with this general approach, which constitutes its primary organizing principle – namely, a focus on four major regions of post-Expulsion kabbalistic activity: North Africa, Italy, the Ottoman Empire, and eastern Europe.

Second, while each of these cultural areas developed in a distinctive manner, it is also the case that they *interacted* with one another in significant and complex ways, by individuals traveling from one place to another, the transmission of kabbalistic manuscripts and printed books, and economic, social, and familial connections. These interactions were dynamic and mutual, characterized by dialectical relationships over significant periods of time.

Third, in recent years kabbalistic scholarship has moved well beyond its nearly exclusive preoccupation with the mythic and theoretical ideas of Kabbalah that characterized an earlier, formative period of historiography. This rather narrow focus came at the expense of rigorous inquiry into the ritual, devotional, and experiential dimensions of mystical creativity. Similarly, little attention was paid to either the social communities in

[1] Moshe Idel, "Jewish Mysticism among the Jews of Arab/Moslem Lands," *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* (February 2007), 15. In an extensive number of articles and books, Idel himself has mapped out such an approach to these various centers of post-Expulsion Kabbalah. Indeed, no one has done more than Moshe Idel to open up and investigate virtually all of the subjects under discussion in the present chapter, as the notes below amply attest. I wish to express my thanks to Professor Boaz Huss, Ben Gurion University, for reading and commenting on this chapter.

which Kabbalah came to life or the important personalities at the heart of those communities. The present chapter conceptualizes the history of Jewish mystical tradition in a more holistic and integrated fashion by drawing attention to these critical features.[2]

Finally, in an intimately related way, a great preponderance of earlier kabbalistic scholarship focused in a disproportionate manner on *elite* religious expression. By this I mean the sophisticated textual tradition produced by the authors of kabbalistic literature. While, needless to say, such textual study is the foundation of all scholarly inquiry into Kabbalah, it is also the case that such preoccupation entailed neglect of the ways in which ordinary people engaged in kabbalistic tradition. Concomitantly, what do we know about the ways in which *women* shared in kabbalistic life and community? Women may have not been the authors of kabbalistic literature – just as they were not authors of rabbinic literature – but they were participants, at the very least by virtue of living among kabbalistically oriented men.

KABBALAH IN NORTH AFRICA

When we speak historically of Kabbalah in North Africa, we have in mind the countries of the Maghreb: Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya. Amongst these, Morocco had the largest Jewish community and was by far the most significant region of kabbalistic activity, and will thus occupy most of our attention in the present discussion. The number of Jews in North Africa swelled with the arrival of Islam in the seventh century, as Jews migrated from other parts of the Middle East and the Mediterranean. These communities served as the basis for the indigenous Jews of the Maghreb, or the *toshavim* ("residents"), in contrast to later Jews from the Iberian Peninsula who came to be known as *megorashim* ("exiles"). The relationship between Iberian and North African Jewry is an ancient and complex one – unsurprisingly, given the close geographic proximity between Spain and the Maghreb. For centuries, Jews in North Africa and Spain traveled back and forth between these two regions. As a result of the massacres and forced conversion of Jews throughout Spain in 1391, some fleeing refugees found their way to Algeria, thus inaugurating a new period of Sephardic settlement in the Maghreb.[3] Settlement in North Africa developed most dramatically, however, in the wake of the Spanish Expulsion and the ensuing turmoil in

[2] Concerning these issues, especially within the setting of sixteenth-century Kabbalah in Safed, see Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, 2003), 7–9.

[3] See H. J. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, vol. I (Leiden, 1974).

Portugal. In contrast to the number of Jews who fled to Portugal, the number of Sephardic exiles who made their way to North Africa was much smaller, perhaps around 30,000 individuals. Nevertheless, the *megorashim* would quickly become a powerful force within the Jewish communities of the Maghreb, as Fez and Marrakech, in particular, became great centers of Jewish life and culture.

Relatively little is known about the state of kabbalistic activity in Morocco from the mid fourteenth century through much of the fifteenth, something that is also true of other centers of Kabbalah during this period.[4] It was in the sixteenth century, however, with the sudden and dramatic arrival of numerous exiled kabbalists from the Iberian Peninsula that North Africa as a whole, and Morocco in particular, developed into an exceedingly important locus of Jewish mystical activity. Kabbalists among the exiles brought with them not only their personal knowledge of the various forms of Spanish Kabbalah, but numerous manuscripts, and a more limited number of printed books as well. The importance of the latter is obvious when we consider the extraordinary loss of books and manuscripts as a result of expulsions, forced conversion, the confiscation of property, and the inevitable loss of personal belongings while fleeing. Even more, "the exiles not only tried to save their books and bring them to their new homes, but very soon . . . resumed their activities as scribes and as printers, as preservers and transmitters of knowledge."[5] Remarkably, the first printed books ever on the African continent were produced by a Hebrew printing press in Fez that functioned between 1516 and 1524, established by a family of Jewish printers from Portugal who brought with them their own type font from Lisbon.

Among the most important of the individuals to reach North Africa in the first half of the sixteenth century were Shimon Lavi (d. *c.* 1585), Abraham Saba (1440–1508), Yehudah Ḥayyat (*c.* 1450 – *c.* 1510), Joseph al-Ashkar (b. *c.* 1500), Abraham Adrutiel b. 1482), and Yehudah Hallewah (mid sixteenth century). The works of these authors were thoroughly

[4] Concerning the history of the kabbalists of North Africa, especially Morocco, see Rachel Elior, "The Kabbalists of Draa" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 24 (1985), 36–73; Moshe Hallamish, *The Kabbalah in North* Africa [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 2001); Moshe Idel, "The Kabbalah in Morocco," in V. Mann, ed., *Morocco: Jews and Art* (London, 2000), 105–24; Idel, "Jewish Mysticism among the Jews of Arab/Moslem Lands," *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* (February 2007), 14–26; Jonathan Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism: From Rabbinic Literature to Safedian* Kabbalah [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2005), 224–31.

[5] Menahem Schmelzer, "Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books among the Sephardim Before and After the Expulsion," in B. Gampel, ed., *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World: 1391–1648* (New York, 1997), 262.

suffused with knowledge of and intense interest in the literature of the Zohar, reflecting the theosophical/theurgical approach to Kabbalah so fundamental to the earlier development of Jewish mysticism in Spain. This preoccupation with the Zohar would come to characterize and define North African kabbalistic tradition for centuries.

With respect to the aforementioned importance of books and manuscripts brought by *megorashim* to North Africa, the example of the prominent kabbalist Yehudah Ḥayyat is instructive. In a dramatic autobiographical account found in the introduction to his work *Minḥat Yehudah*, we learn that Ḥayyat and his family were among those who fled to Portugal in 1492.[6] Sometime in that year or the following one, he sailed with his family and 250 others from Lisbon. As was the case with so many in similar circumstances, those on board faced one crisis after another, including illness, starvation, piracy, and attempts to force Christian conversion upon them. After being denied permission to disembark at various ports, the ship eventually reached Fez. According to Ḥayyat, upon arrival in Morocco he was accused of having previously defamed Islam. After fellow Jews paid for his release by way of a ransom, Ḥayyat expressed his gratitude by giving them nearly 200 books in his possession. As a result of the altogether miserable conditions in Fez, Ḥayyat remained in Morocco for only a short time. He departed in 1493, eventually making his way to Venice, where fellow Jews warmly welcomed him. While we will encounter Ḥayyat again in our discussion of Italian Kabbalah, for the moment we note the importance of such a large cache of textual materials that had been in the possession of a prominent Spanish kabbalist.

Another outstanding example of the contribution refugees from Spain made in seeking to preserve and re-establish knowledge of Spanish Kabbalah comes from the work of the aforementioned Abraham Adrutiel.[7] In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Adrutiel compiled *'Avnei Zikkaron* in Fez, a voluminous anthology comprised of textual materials from a wide range of kabbalistic books from Spain, including some that are no longer extant in full form, but which he mentions by

[6] *Minḥat Yehudah,* published as commentary to *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut* (Mantua, 1553), 2b–3a. For discussion of Ḥayyat's autobiographical account, and the travails he experienced, see Michal Oron, "Autobiographical Elements in the Writings of Kabbalists from the Generation of the Expulsion," *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 6, 2 (December 1991), 102–11; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy, 1280–1510* (New Haven, 2011), 213–14; Brian Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth: Reincarnation in Early Modern Italian Kabbalah* (Leiden, 2009), 140–4.

[7] Concerning the life and work of Adrutiel, see Gershom Scholem, "*Sefer Avnei Zikkaron*" [Hebrew], *Kiryat Sefer*, 6 (1929), 259–76; Idel, "The Kabbalah in Morocco," 116; Hallamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, 15, 21.

name. We find in this book zoharic materials, including certain Zohar texts that, according to Adrutiel himself, were otherwise unknown.[8] Like others, Adrutiel was motivated by a great sense of urgency in preserving knowledge of these materials, an aspiration partially fulfilled by his project. Adrutiel self-consciously presents himself as someone who was merely guarding traditions, rather than innovating. He clearly believed that his generation of kabbalists paled in comparison to former ones, and spoke of himself "as a tail among lions" (*Pirkei Avot* 4:2). All of this is consistent with the broadly conservative tendencies of the first-generation *megorashim*.

THE ROLE OF ZOHAR IN NORTH AFRICA

I want to illustrate the centrality of zoharic literature to these kabbalists by way of the figure of Shimon Lavi. Little is known with much certainty about Lavi's life. While there are various traditions according to which he was born in Spain and was thus among those exiled from the Iberian Peninsula, the difficulty with this is that he apparently composed his great work, *Ketem Paz*, in 1571, and died in 1585. It is implausible that Lavi wrote *Ketem Paz* at what would have been a very advanced age, or that he lived into his 90s. What we do know is that he lived in Fez, Morocco, until approximately 1549 when he departed for the Land of Israel. But he wound up instead in Tripoli, where he found a virtually illiterate Jewish community desperately in need of his guidance and teaching. He remained in Tripoli until his death. Lavi's gravesite in Libya has remained an object of veneration through the centuries among North African Jews, attesting to his enduring influence. Arguably the most important kabbalistic work composed in Morocco, *Ketem Paz* consists of commentary on the zoharic interpretations of the book of Genesis, although it appears that he also composed a commentary to the Zohar of the book of Exodus that is no longer extant.[9] Although Lavi's book was barely cited by others before the eighteenth century, it is nevertheless considered a work of very considerable significance.

In *Ketem Paz*, Lavi frames his kabbalistic ideas in the form of commentaries, explanations, and elaborations upon the Zohar. Along with that of

[8] See Boaz Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky: Chapters in the Reception History of the Zohar and the Construction of its Symbolic Value* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2008), 112–13.

[9] *Ketem Paz* was printed for the first time in 1795 in Livorno, Italy, where there was a significant community of Moroccan Jews. For a full-length study of Lavi, see Boaz Huss, *Sockets of Fine Gold: The Kabbalah of Rabbi Shimon Ibn Lavi* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2001); Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, esp. 116–17. See also Pinchas Giller, *Reading the Zohar: The Sacred Text of the Kabbalah* (Oxford, 2001), esp. 27–8, 77–9.

Moses Cordovero (1522–70) in Safed,[10] Lavi's work is one of the very earliest treatises composed as a running commentary on zoharic materials, and one of the very few to do so without recourse to Lurianic Kabbalah. The desire to elucidate the Zohar began almost immediately after its appearance in Spain, but it was not until the sixteenth century that commentary emerged as a primary genre of kabbalistic literary activity. Before the printing of the Zohar in Italy in the middle of the sixteenth century, there was no single version of this literature. On the contrary, as is well known, from its inception in Spain in the latter decades of the thirteenth century, zoharic materials were disseminated and circulated in an exceedingly large number of manuscripts. Over the course of the next couple of centuries, the amount of these manuscripts proliferated tremendously. These were fragmentary manuscripts, differing from one another in large and small ways. Before the sixteenth century, there was no agreement even with respect to which materials were an authentic part of zoharic literature. As a result, there was no single, stable, identifiable version of this voluminous and variegated literature, let alone something that could be called a single *book*. Indeed, we can say that there *was* no book of the Zohar until its appearance in print. One of the consequences of this was the widespread effort on the part of kabbalistic scholars in the first half of the sixteenth century, especially in North Africa, Italy, and Safed, to collect and establish a unified and more complete set of texts. Boaz Huss has argued that, given the indeterminate nature of the zoharic literature, engaging in the practice of collecting and establishing a corpus of zoharic materials was a means of gaining cultural power:

> The collection and edition and possession of Zoharic texts, and the ability to cite from them, enhanced the power of those who were in possession of these texts. As the scope of the Zoharic canon was not yet defined, kabbalists, scribes, and later, printers, attempted to create exhaustive compilations of the Zohar. To put it bluntly, the bigger one's Zohar was, the larger his cultural capital.[11]

[10] Cordovero's voluminous commentaries on the Zohar were published under the title *Or Yakar*. See Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, esp. 114–15.

[11] Boaz Huss, "Interpretation and Power: The Emergence of *Zohar* Hermeneutics in the 16th Century," E-lecture, The Goldstein-Goren Institute of Jewish Thought, Ben Gurion University; Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, esp. 85–6, 116. As Huss points out, the greatest number of zoharic manuscripts copied in the first half of the sixteenth century were accomplished in Italy, despite the fact that the Zohar was little known there before then, evidence of the influence of exiled kabbalists from Spain. There has been a great amount of new scholarship on the complex questions having to do with the status of zoharic manuscripts and literature through the period of its initial printing in Italy in the sixteenth century. For the most elaborate discussion of these issues, see Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory* (Jerusalem, 2010), especially pt. 4, "The Invention of the *Zohar* as a Book." For a general survey of the literature, history, and teachings of the Zohar, see Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford, 2004).

By the same token, once the literature of the Zohar *was* stabilized and established – and in effect canonized as a result of its having been published in printed form – the value of such cultural power gave way to those who were able to *explain* and *interpret* its meaning. Indeed, in Huss's view, it was precisely this process of stabilization that led to a shift in which

> cultural power was no longer in the hands of those who had exclusive access to the zoharic texts, but in the hands of those who claimed to have access to its understanding. Hence, the emergence of Zohar hermeneutics as a central kabbalistic practice and the production of the first wide-scale commentaries in the two decades that followed the first printing of the Zohar.[12]

This moment of transition may be seen in Lavi's *Ketem Paz* insofar as he not only collected zoharic texts, but also became familiar with the versions printed in Italy (which he also critiqued) and engaged in an elaborate project of commentary.[13] As was true with all of the kabbalists from Spain at this time, Lavi regarded the Zohar as being an ancient, sacred, and authoritative body of literature, and as bearing the most profound understanding of the Torah.[14]

POPULARIZING TENDENCIES

The role of the Zohar in North Africa, however, was by no means limited to elite kabbalists. Since its appearance in the thirteenth century in Castile, the Zohar had been more or less the exclusive provenance of the scholarly, kabbalistic elite, and treated as esoteric by the small circles of initiates who studied, contemplated, and transmitted it.[15] In the Maghreb, however, the Zohar was ever so gradually embraced as an object of veneration, and

[12] Huss, "Interpretation and Power"; Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, 188–90.

[13] Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, 188–90. As Huss puts it ("Interpretation and Power"): "the fact that both kabbalists [that is, Lavi and Cordovero] turned to write commentaries to the Zohar after its printing indicates an attempt to establish their own cultural power as interpreters of the Zohar, that is, as controlling the meaning of the sacred and authoritative text . . . the arena in which kabbalists struggled for cultural dominancy was the hermeneutical one."

[14] Concerning the establishment of the Zohar as canonical, see Boaz Huss, "*Sefer ha-Zohar* as a Canonical, Sacred and Holy Text: Changing Perspectives of the Book of Splendor between the Thirteenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *The Journal of Jewish Thought* 7 (1998), 257–307; Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, ch. 3.

[15] It is important to note, however, that a central tension within zoharic literature *itself* is the ambivalence expressed over whether it is fitting to reveal esoteric secrets. The fact that manuscripts *were* disseminated, beginning in the latter decades of the thirteenth century, attests to the degree to which some of its earliest students believed in having it known by others.

employed for a variety of ritual and devotional purposes by ordinary folk, possibly including women. Indeed, this should be seen as part of a broader engagement in kabbalistic practice at the level of the wider community, a process that became a distinguishing, although by no means unique, feature of the history of Kabbalah in the Maghreb, especially by the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries.[16] Boaz Huss has characterized such unconventional uses of the Zohar as establishing its role and status as a "holy book" for non-semantic purposes – that is, for purposes other than normal study.

While much of the evidence we have about these practices (some of which were found elsewhere as well) derives from the eighteenth century forward, presumably some of them originated earlier. The most common practice was regularized, public, communal, study of the Zohar. For example, in the study house of Rabbi Moses Darmon (d. 1741) in Tripoli, once the site of a rich library of Hebrew books, ordinary people gathered daily for the purpose of studying the Zohar, a practice that took place until the end of the nineteenth century. In synagogues, study houses, and homes throughout North Africa, the Zohar was also "studied" in a *recitative* manner, that is, read or chanted without attention to the meaning of the text. This recitative practice developed in communities throughout the Near East and the Mediterranean basin, including Safed, as well as elsewhere.[17] In addition to routine weekly occasions for such a purpose – before or after a prayer service, late evening, Sabbath eve, or the end of the Sabbath – there were numerous other special occasions. These included, for example, the eves of Lag Ba-Omer and Hoshanah Rabbah, the eve of a ritual circumcision, visits to a house of mourning, or at the home of one who was dangerously ill.[18] Such practice was rooted in the confidence that, on account of its profound holiness, merely reciting the Zohar was spiritually beneficial. This was combined with the nearly universal conviction across the Maghreb that the Zohar's sanctity endowed it with a *protective* quality, that devotion to it could produce intercession in the heavens on behalf of those in need on earth, especially to protect one's family from harm and illness. Individuals also recited the Zohar privately, often in their own homes. As late as the latter part of the nineteenth century, one Tunisian rabbi prepared a vocalized edition of the Zohar that was printed

[16] On this subject, see Hallamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, esp. chs. 7, 10, 17, and 18; Huss, "*Sefer ha-Zohar* as a Canonical, Sacred and Holy Text," 295–8; Harvey Goldberg, "The Zohar in Southern Morocco: A Study in the Ethnography of Texts," *History of Religions* 29 (1990), 233–58; Abraham Stahl, "Ritual Reading of the Zohar" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 5 (1980), 7–86.

[17] This has been well documented by Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, esp. 251–4, 261–5.

[18] Ibid., esp. 261–2.

in a large font "for the purpose of arousing a person's heart so that he can establish a fixed time either during the day or the night to engage in the study of the Zohar, or at very least, to recite three pages of the text," with the goal of studying the text in its entirety over the course of the year.[19]

Other popularizing customs involved venerating the Zohar by giving it an honored place in the synagogue, typically near the ark where the Torah was held; simply *possessing* a copy of the Zohar in one's home to protect oneself and one's family from all harm; and, according to at least one report, holding a volume of the Zohar while swearing an oath to a gentile![20] Besides this apotropaic function, veneration of the Zohar also entailed reverence for its putative author, Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai. In many places, there were small fellowships dedicated to celebrating his memory. For such groups, as well as for whole communities – including women – Lag Ba-Omer, in particular, became the holiday *par excellence* in which to celebrate the Zohar and its author through feasting, song and dance, and study.[21] The Hebrew poem *Bar Yoḥai*, attributed to Shimon Lavi, became extraordinarily popular in North Africa and elsewhere, and quickly found its way into prayer books.[22]

The veneration of Shimon bar Yoḥai should be seen in the broader context of the tradition of venerating holy men among North African Jews. In addition to the kabbalists who were active in the north of Morocco, in the cities of Fez and Marrakech in particular, another community of kabbalists emerged in the middle of the sixteenth century in southern Morocco, in the area of the High Atlas Mountains and the Draa Valley.[23] This community was comprised of indigenous Jews whose families had lived in this region for centuries, along with a smaller number of new immigrants from the Iberian Peninsula. A wide range of traditions attests to the fact that these kabbalists cultivated various kinds of "occult" mystical experiences: revelations of the prophet Elijah (*gilui Eliyahu*), attainment of the Holy Spirit (*ru'ah ha-qodesh*, a form of divine inspiration or illumination similar to "prophetic" experience), visionary dreams, and the composition of texts under the auspices of heavenly inspiration.

[19] This book was published in Livorno between 1872 and 1884. See Hallamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, 98–9.

[20] Huss, "*Sefer ha-Zohar* as a Canonical, Sacred and Holy Text," 295.

[21] Hallamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, 101–2.

[22] See Moshe Hallamish, *The Kabbalah in Prayer, Law, and Custom* [Hebrew] (Ramat Gan, 2000), chs. 12 and 13, as well as Peter Cole, *The Poetry of Kabbalah* (New Haven, 2012), 174–5, 180–2, 393–9.

[23] See Elior, "The Kabbalists of Draa"; Idel, "The Kabbalah in Morocco," 117–18; Hallamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, 17.

Among the Draa kabbalists, Mordecai Buzaglo, author of *Ma'ayanot ha-Ḥokhmah*, contended that the revelation of kabbalistic mysteries that he experienced was a result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which suffused his writing instrument in a form of automatic writing.

The profound interest in these kinds of phenomena on the part of the kabbalists of Draa, along with a pattern of venerating those adept at such practices, is strikingly similar to the beliefs of the Muslim Marabouts among whom the Jewish community of southern Morocco lived. At the heart of Marabout religion stands the notion of *baraka* ("blessing," in Arabic) – that is, the strong manifestation of the holy. While *baraka* can infuse just about any object, natural or otherwise, its most important locus is human beings. Those suffused with the charisma of *baraka* exhibit magical and occult powers, wonder-working, foretelling the future, and moral excellence. The elaborate and pervasive veneration of such saints, living and deceased, came to characterize this type of piety throughout much of the Maghreb. It appears that the Jews of southern Morocco, surrounded by this religious culture, appropriated and adapted various elements of it. As we shall see, many of these same practices became common in sixteenth-century Safed, no doubt influenced in part by a number of important kabbalists who migrated to the Land of Israel from southern Morocco, including Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi Berukhim and Joseph ibn Tabul.

KABBALAH IN ITALY

Contemporary historiography on the subject of Italian Kabbalah is far more extensive than is the case with North Africa. This is a result of several factors, including the much greater scholarly interest in Italian Jewish history generally, and the fact that the sources for the study of Kabbalah in Italy are vast, relative to those having to do with North Africa.[24] As was true for the Maghreb, kabbalistic activity also began in Italy in the thirteenth century. Two individuals, in particular, exerted

[24] Moshe Idel has written an extensive number of detailed studies on this subject, much of which has been synthesized in his *Kabbalah in Italy*. See the bibliography there, including many of his specialized studies. In addition, see Robert Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1990), 280–98; Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley, 1994), esp. 145–77; Bonfil, *Cultural Change among the Jews of Early Modern* Italy (Farnham, UK, 2010); David Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic and Science: The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-Century Physician* (Cambridge, MA, 1988); Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010); Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth*; Roni Weinstein, *Juvenile Sexuality, Kabbalah, and Catholic Reformation in Italy* (Leiden, 2009).

very considerable influence upon Italian kabbalistic culture. Abraham Abulafia (thirteenth century), the originator of "ecstatic" or "prophetic" Kabbalah, was born in Saragossa but traveled peripatetically throughout the Mediterranean, including Italy. Several of Abulafia's most important works were written in Italy, and his influence would be felt there for centuries to come.[25] Menaḥem Recanati (1250–1310), author of several exceedingly consequential kabbalistic treatises, including a commentary on the Torah, was born in Italy, where he lived his entire life.[26]

The pattern described above with respect to the Spanish Expulsion and North Africa was replicated in the case of Italy. Among the Iberian exiles and refugees to arrive in Italy at the end of the fifteenth century and the early decades of the sixteenth, there were a number of important kabbalists. These included the aforementioned Yehudah Ḥayyat, Isaac Mor Ḥayyim, Joseph ibn Shraga, Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi, Isaac ben Ḥayyim ha-Kohen, and possibly Joseph Alqastiel and Abraham Saba. Of these, we are particularly interested in Ḥayyat insofar as he is the most prominent amongst these individuals. Ḥayyat is well known in the history of Kabbalah for his classic commentary to another book, *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut*, one of the most important kabbalistic treatises from Spain, composed in the early fourteenth century. Entitled *Minḥat Yehudah*, this commentary was written after he departed Fez, most probably between 1494 and 1496 in Mantua. It was published for the first time alongside *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut* in Ferrara in 1557, and by a competing press in Mantua in 1558. Thus, in print, the title became *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut im Perush ha-Ḥayyat*. While the early group of kabbalists in Italy did not produce a large literature, the works that were written there were highly influential in that country and elsewhere. This is particularly true of Ḥayyat's work, which achieved widespread recognition.[27]

Ḥayyat's autobiographical remarks include rather unusual testimony about the circumstances surrounding his decision to write his commentary. He describes a meeting in Mantua with Joseph Ya'avetz, another exile from Spain, accompanied by "other respected wise men" who prevailed upon him to elucidate *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut* due to the fact that "their soul desired to contemplate the delight of the Lord and visit his palace," and so as not to "prevent them from learning." In addition, Ḥayyat avers that *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut* was important insofar as it served as *entrée* to otherwise neglected

[25] See Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, especially chs. 2–7. [26] See ibid., chs. 8–10.
[27] Ibid., 213.

questions of Kabbalah, and that he was critical of a widely known existing commentary on this book, written by an anonymous author.[28]

Given Ḥayyat's stated admiration for this text, it is ironic in the extreme that he adopted a critical stance toward it in a number of respects. For one thing, Ḥayyat, who, according to his own testimony, had personally collected zoharic materials while still in Spain, opposes *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut* whenever he believes it asserts views that contradict those of the Zohar. In connection with this, he questions why the anonymous author was attracted to the relatively philosophic approach to Kabbalah of earlier Iberian scholars Moshe ben Nahman (Nahmanides) and Solomon ibn Adret, instead of the more mythic perspective espoused by the Zohar. Indeed, the author of *Ma'arechet ha-Elohut* had followed the more scholastic, intellectually oriented approach that not only was characteristic of Nahmanides and Adret, but also was the prevailing tradition in Italy. Ḥayyat, a fervent devotee of the Zohar, one who testified that his allegiance to this book kept him personally safe during his recent travails, and who believed that its study would facilitate the arrival of the Messiah, thus sought in his work of commentary to *counter* the philosophic and anti-mythic Italian approach. As Moshe Idel put it:

> The fact that Hayyat wrote an entire work on a book whose spiritual messages he did not entirely accept may reflect the situation that Spanish Kabbalists confronted in Italy: because writing on the Zohar itself was not attractive to the Italian Jewish kabbalists, he used their interest in *Ma'arechet ha-Elohut* to disseminate a great dose of mythical Kabbalah under the pretext of clarifying an essentially antimythical text.[29]

It should be pointed out that not only was the Zohar not appealing to Italian kabbalists, but also it was relatively little known there in the first half of the sixteenth century.[30]

Ḥayyat's bias in favor of the mythically disposed school of Spanish Kabbalah is vividly manifest in the distinction he draws in his introduction between kabbalistic books of which he approves, and those of which he disapproves. He enumerates in detail the books that fall into each of these categories. Approved books include *Sefer Yetzirah, Sefer ha-Bahir, Sefer ha-*

[28] Ibid., 214. In the view of Ephraim Gottlieb (in Joseph Hacker, ed., *Studies in the Kabbalah Literature* [Hebrew] [Tel Aviv, 1976], 357–69), the author of the commentary to which Ḥayyat objected was Reuven Zarfati. Ḥayyat refers to it as "perush zulati," ("the commentary that is not mine")! The immense popularity of *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut* in Italy is attested by the numerous commentaries it engendered, beginning in the late fifteenth century.

[29] Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 216–17. [30] Ibid., 225.

Zohar, the various works of Joseph Gikatilla, Moshe de Leon, and Menaḥem Recanati, and, in an apparent contradiction of his criticism of the proclivity of *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut* toward Nahmanides, "the secrets of Nahmanides," which "should be written upon the table of your heart."[31] The works that Ḥayyat repudiates include the aforementioned anonymous commentary on *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut* that had wide circulation in the region of Mantua. This treatise, in his opinion, was lamentably composed "according to philosophical premises." Other books, as well, "have been disseminated in this region, works of Kabbalah that confuse the pure mind," including those of Isaac ibn Latif (at least his kabbalistic treatises), Samuel ibn Motot (a philosopher who wrote a limited amount of Kabbalah), and, more disconcertingly for Ḥayyat, the oeuvre of Abraham Abulafia. Of the latter's numerous books, Ḥayyat mentions by name *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba, Or ha-Sekhel*, and a commentary by Abulafia to Moses Maimonides's *Moreh Nevuchin*. Ḥayyat reserves his strongest criticism for Abulafia's teachings, characterizing them as "full of imaginary things and forgeries invented by his own heart." Impugning Abulafia's integrity and character, he asserts that Abulafia tried to impress readers by including drawings of circles, "as he believed that by doing so he would distract from its deficiencies," and that he was a fool and a liar who pretended to be a prophet and the Messiah!

What do we make of this intense, polemical vitriol? The answer lies in Ḥayyat's profound conviction that *true* Kabbalah was restricted to the mythic, theurgical approach of the Zohar and the other works of which he approves – in contradistinction to the tendencies toward intellection and the philosophical *mentalité* that he encountered in Renaissance Italy. Again, Idel: "Several types of Kabbalah existed in Italy in the generation of the expulsion, operating on different levels and in different views. Whereas Spanish Kabbalah was particularist, antiphilosophical, and conservative, Italian Kabbalah, both Jewish and Christian, was much more universalist, more inclined to magic, and subject to interpretation through the use of a variety of philosophical trends."[32] Importantly, all of this is part of a significantly larger framework – that is, a rather intense antipathy toward religious philosophy *per se* among the majority of Spanish kabbalists, an antipathy that came to the fore especially in their encounter with the philosophically suffused intellectual culture of Jews and Christians in Renaissance Italy.[33]

[31] See ibid., 220–1; see also Boaz Huss's English translation of part of Ḥayyat's introduction, including the enumeration of these books, online at: http://www.earlymodern.org/workshops/summer2004/videos.php, as well as his lecture on this subject.

[32] Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 218.

[33] On this matter, see ibid., 222–4.

This said, the picture is actually more complicated and interesting in that we can discern the *influence* of this philosophical climate upon the very individuals who accused philosophy of constituting a flawed approach to religious truth! As Idel observed in Ḥayyat's case, for example, by agreeing to comment on *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut*, he found himself caught up in negotiating the kinds of questions that characterized the more systematic and scholastic turn of mind of Italian kabbalists and philosophers.[34] In his study of reincarnation (*gilgul neshamot*) in early modern Italian Kabbalah, Brian Ogren adduced another example of this dynamic – that is, ways in which kabbalistic critics of philosophical approaches themselves blur the lines in their own work. Ogren discusses a series of eighteen questions on the subject of *gilgul* and philosophical psychology that Joseph Alcastiel posed to Ḥayyat. The questions and the responses were formulated in scholastic and philosophical ways, betraying what can only be called a more speculative style of discourse.[35]

Even as the influence of religious philosophy generally began to wane among Jewish thinkers in Italy, beginning in the final years of the sixteenth century, the question of the relationship between Kabbalah and philosophy again assumed significance, this time in connection with the teachings of the distinguished kabbalist Isaac Luria (1538–72) that emanated from Safed. A small, but exceedingly important constellation of northern Italian scholars were the first individuals outside Palestine to acquire knowledge of Lurianic tradition and to subject it to their own creative, interpretive forces. Although it was once believed that Israel Sarug (d. 1610) was responsible for introducing Lurianic teachings to these scholars, it appears that Lurianic manuscripts reached Italy even before Sarug's activities there in the last years of the sixteenth century.[36] The study of these manuscripts, along with the distinctive version of Lurianic thought taught by Sarug, deeply influenced such illustrious individuals as Menaḥem Azariah da Fano (1548–1620), Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591–1655), Abraham Herrera (d. 1635), and Aaron Berekhiah of Modena (d. 1639). In an act of creative adaptation, these authors fashioned highly complex, philosophically oriented Lurianic treatises, informed by Renaissance magical notions

[34] Ibid., 216. [35] Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth*, 139–62.

[36] Concerning the contested question of whether Sarug was a personal student of Isaac Luria, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, p. 362 n. 1, and the bibliography there, especially Gershom Scholem, "Israel Sarug: Student of the Ari?" [Hebrew], *Zion* 5 (1940), 133–60; and Ronit Meroz, "R. Israel Sarug, Student of R. Isaac Luria: A New Inquiry" [Hebrew], *Da'at* 28 (1992), 41–50. On the relationship between the kabbalists of Safed and of Italy, see Moshe Idel, "Italy in Safed, Safed in Italy: Toward an Interactive History of Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah," in D. Ruderman and V. Giuseppe, eds., *Cultural Intermediaries in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia, 2004), 239–69.

and Neoplatonism. These individuals were interested in the metaphysical rather than the mythic or devotional aspects of Lurianic teaching, and over time their works gained considerable appeal and influenced various other elite kabbalistic thinkers.[37] This phenomenon, then, represents a continuation – in a new form – of the philosophizing and scholastic propensity of much of Italian Kabbalah.

BEYOND ESOTERICISM: THE PRINTING OF KABBALISTIC BOOKS IN ITALY

We have already briefly discussed aspects of the popularization of Kabbalah in the context of North Africa. The gradual dissemination and relative popularization of Kabbalah took place in the early modern period in other great centers of Jewish mystical life as well, a process in which Italy played a crucial role. A critical factor in this development was the printing revolution that occurred in late medieval Europe, with its profound implications for all of Jewish culture, not the least of which was the culture of Kabbalah.[38]

A project to print the Zohar in Mantua incited a bitter controversy within certain circles of the Italian rabbinate in 1557–8, centered in the city of Pesaro.[39] This controversy was primarily, though not entirely, an intra-kabbalistic one, pitting kabbalists who rejected the dissemination of the Zohar to wider circles against those who were convinced of the importance

[37] This important topic deserves far more attention than the present chapter is able to provide. A quite considerable body of scholarly literature has focused on the kabbalistic writings of these Italian scholars. See, for example, Alexander Altmann, "Lurianic Kabbalah in a Platonic Key: Abraham Cohen Herrera's *Puerta del Cielo*," in Bernard Septimus and Isadore Twersky, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), as well as the detailed bibliographical remarks in Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, p. 362 n. 3.

[38] Scholarship on the history of Jewish printing has advanced dramatically in the last couple of decades. For a valuable discussion of the implications of the printing revolution for early modern Judaism, see Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 99–125. See also Joseph R. Hacker and Adam Shear, eds., *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia, 2011).

[39] This controversy is well documented and has been much studied, but scholars have proposed numerous different views about the arguments and motives on each side. See, for example, Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. I (London, 1989), 97–9; Tishby, "The Controversy Concerning *Sefer ha-Zohar* in Sixteenth-Century Italy" [Hebrew], in Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah and its Branches* [Hebrew], vol. I (Jerusalem, 1982), 79–130; Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities*, 282–4; Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 170–2; Bernard Cooperman, translation of documents relevant to the controversy, www.earlymodern.org/workshop/2009/cooperman; Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, esp. 227–9, 230–8.

of doing so. Those who vigorously opposed the Zohar's printing posited various arguments, including the view that not everyone was qualified to study esoteric wisdom due to "the shortcomings of the student and the profundity of the subject." In their opinion, it was forbidden to disclose the Torah's kabbalistic mysteries to the public at large. This argument and others failed to persuade the editors and printers, who turned instead to the views of rabbis who repudiated the opponents of printing. In particular, Isaac de Lattes, the head of a *yeshiva* in Pesaro, and Judah ben Moshe played critical roles in this regard. De Lattes had originally been an opponent of publication, but changed his views, becoming the most persuasive voice in favor. He and others made the argument that the printing of the Zohar was actually sacred work that would counter the prevailing ardor among many in Italy for philosophical study. As for the argument that it was forbidden to reveal the Torah's secrets, advocates made the point that the Zohar was already accessible in manuscript, but that only those with wealth could afford to obtain it, leaving those without means bereft of this profound wisdom. Most importantly, certain proponents argued that widespread study of the Zohar – which would be made possible by its dissemination through printing – would facilitate messianic redemption, a view that had circulated in various quarters for some time, and, as noted above, had been articulated by Judah Ḥayyat in his commentary to *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut*. Some also feared that authority over the Zohar would be left to Christian Hebraists who had appropriated Kabbalah, beginning in the fifteenth century, as part of the eclectic and cosmopolitan intellectualism of Italian Renaissance thinkers.[40] Finally, there is also no doubt that there was an economic motivation to produce a printed edition of the Zohar, as evidenced by the close relationships between rabbinic advocates and the printers themselves.[41] That various printers were interested in producing kabbalistic books in the 1550s "is striking evidence of the enthusiasm of the publishers and their feeling of confidence that they had in fact found a market thirsting for their work."[42] Thus, the publication of these books ought not to be seen as the *beginning* of a process of cultural transformation,

[40] A considerable body of literature explores the appropriation of Kabbalah on the part of Christian Hebraists, especially in Italy. For an overview of this subject, see Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 227–35. For detailed studies of this phenomenon, see Joseph Dan, ed., *The Christian Kabbalah: Jewish Mystical Books and Their Christian Interpreters* (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

[41] Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, 231.

[42] Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities*, 282–3. A newly discovered contract related to the Cremona edition of the Zohar reveals that 800 copies were printed there, while the slightly earlier Mantua edition probably had about the same number. As Bonfil observed, "One may infer that such a large quantity was not aimed solely at the market

but rather one that reflects a development that had been taking place for some decades.

In the end, on the basis of ten different manuscripts, the Zohar *was* printed in Mantua in three volumes between 1558 and 1560, by rabbis Meir ben Ephraim and Jacob ben Naphtali, and included the approbation of Isaac de Lattes, setting forth in detail his arguments in favor of the book's publication. The same printers had also produced an edition of *Tikkunei Zohar* in the previous year, while a competing publishing house in Cremona – using different manuscripts – published a text of the Zohar in a single volume in 1559–60. Due to its large folio format, the Cremona edition became known as *Zohar Gadol*, while the Mantua edition became known as *Zohar Katan*. It was the Mantua printing that would go on to serve as the primary basis for all succeeding editions of the Zohar, except for two seventeenth-century printings that followed that of Cremona. As noted above, around the same time, first in Ferrara and then in Mantua, *Ma'arechet ha-'Elohut* with Ḥayyat's commentary was also published. Before long, Italy would become the greatest center of Hebrew printing, including kabbalistic printing, as one work after another was published through the seventeenth century – altogether, approximately 35 different works.

We see in all this a crucial factor in the emerging democratization and gradual popularization of a tradition that had hitherto been regarded as radically esoteric, fit only for qualified kabbalistic *cognoscenti* who carefully guarded its secrets. As Robert Bonfil put it, speaking in particular of the growing diffusion of Kabbalah in Italy: "After an extended period of esoteric incubation, in which it was cultivated by a rather narrow circle of adepts, the Kabbalah emerged from seclusion in the sixteenth century and laid claim to a place of honor in Jewish society."[43] Prior to this, access to kabbalistic knowledge had come almost exclusively through the medium of a teacher, who transmitted esoteric mysteries to carefully selected disciples "in a whisper," and from scarce and highly costly manuscripts. *Control* over knowledge and its transmission had been absolutely central to kabbalistic identity in the three centuries of its formative development. Much of this changed now that printed texts were available for study and

of Italian Jews, who hardly amounted to more than thirty thousand souls. Occasional surveys of subsequent literary production strongly suggest that while the Mantua edition was directed toward Ottoman markets, the Cremona edition was directed toward those of Eastern Europe"; see Bonfil, "A Cultural Profile," in R. C. Davis and B. Ravid, eds., *The Jews of Early Modern Venice* (Baltimore, 2001), 169–90. Interest in the literature of the Zohar is unabated even in our own time, as evidenced by the important, multivolumed English translation by Daniel Matt, Joel Hecker, and Nathan Wolski, published by Stanford University Press beginning in 2003.

[43] Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 170.

entered the public domain. Moreover, as far as the Zohar was concerned, in place of hundreds of fragmentary manuscripts, it was now a *book* between covers, elevating it to a new level of prominence and, to many who had no prior knowledge, endowing it with canonical authority. The Zohar, and cognate kabbalistic literature, would eventually rival rabbinic tradition for significance and prestige throughout the Jewish world, in part as a result of these developments.

Vivid testimony concerning the extent to which kabbalistic ideas and practices had permeated Italian Jewish culture by the seventeenth century can also be found in the fierce polemic *opposing* these developments by Leon Modena (1571–1648), among the most prominent Italian rabbis during his lifetime. In his *Ari Nohem* [The Lion Roars], composed in 1639, Modena bitterly laments the fact that a tradition that had once been limited to small numbers of initiates by way of manuscripts and oral transmission had, through the medium of printing, become so casually available, and had become a harmful, corrupting, cultural force.

> However, since their printing, whoever has coins or cash in his hands and knows how to read, . . . purchases books, considers them, and imagines that he understands and knows them. The plague has spread to countless individuals. For even if you say that these are the words of the living God and exalted wisdom, there is no doubt that abandonment, error, and heresy have increased among the masses.[44]

As Yaacob Dweck put it, Kabbalah, according to Modena, "had become all the rage, in no small part because of the availability of basic texts in print and a radical shift in the process of transmission."[45] As we have seen, by the time Modena had become a young adult, many of the most important classical kabbalistic texts had seen the light of day through the printing presses of northern Italy, especially in Venice. And by the time he penned his critique, a profusion of contemporary books bearing the stamp of kabbalistic influence had also been printed. Even though he personally admired aspects of the Zohar, Modena was deeply disturbed by the ways in which Kabbalah had come to challenge, even usurp, the hegemony of other forms of Jewish religious culture, particularly rabbinic, as well as philosophic rationalism in its Maimonidean iteration. With his skeptical, critical eye, he also railed against the "misguided" belief that the Zohar (and certain other kabbalistic treatises) were works of antiquity, and thus equal in worth to, say, classical rabbinic tradition.

[44] Quoted in Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Stanford, 2011), 71. This work is an important study of Modena's complex critique of the influence of Kabbalah upon Italian Jewish culture.

[45] Ibid.

Still other compelling evidence of the diffusion of Kabbalah in Italy is the fact that it became the subject of public teaching through its inclusion in rabbinic sermons and its arrival in the public space of the synagogue.[46] Moreover, beginning in the final two decades of the sixteenth century, we witness the emerging influence of Kabbalah upon religious ritual and prayer, as well as Jewish law.[47] The first prayer book to reflect liturgical innovations of a kabbalistic nature was printed in 1587–8, after which numerous Italian prayer books began to include kabbalistic features. Kabbalah may also be seen to have broadly permeated Jewish life in the activities of the many religious confraternities, as "Mutual aid, works of charity, the study of sacred texts, all assumed toward the end of the century a social character ever more influenced by kabbalistic practices."[48] Concomitantly, kabbalistic notions and customs influenced all manner of personal practices and life-cycle rituals, from educational and sexual practices to rites of childhood, marriage, and death.[49] All of this is attested in the huge proliferation of extra-liturgical printed books for a variety of occasions, including the genre of *tikkunim* that encompassed kabbalistic materials.

In short, Kabbalah had a vast and dramatic impact upon Italian Jewish culture. There is no single explanation for the increasing embrace of kabbalistic ideas and practices among a wider number of Jews in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy. For those who viewed Jewish philosophic rationalism as being spiritually or theologically unsatisfying, Kabbalah appears to have provided an attractive alternative insofar as the latter privileged various types of religious *experience* over intellectuality. To those who were animated by a degree of messianic enthusiasm, the printing of the Zohar and the spreading knowledge of kabbalistic mysteries were regarded, as noted above, as serving the dream of redemption. Many were no doubt motivated by the sense of existential *empowerment* that kabbalistic theurgy offered,[50] and found ritual life enhanced by being suffused

[46] See David Ruderman, *Preachers of the Italian Ghetto* (Berkeley, 1992).

[47] Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 171.

[48] Ibid. See also Michal Andreatta, "The Printing of Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Italy: Prayer Books Printed for the Shomrim la-Boker Confraternities," in Hacker and Shear, eds., *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy*, 156–70.

[49] On this subject, see the valuable study by Weinstein, *Juvenile Sexuality, Kabbalah and the Catholic Reformation in Italy*; Weinstein, "The Rise of the Body in Early Modern Jewish Society: The Italian Case-Study," in D. Maria and V. Giuseppe, eds., *The Jewish Body: Corporeality, Society, and Identity in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period* (Boston, 2008), 15–55; Weinstein, *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 2011), ch. 5.

[50] On this central feature of Kabbalah, see Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism*. In Robert Bonfil's view, the kabbalistic confidence in the power of human

with kabbalistic intentions, not to mention the appeal of altogether new rites. In Robert Bonfil's view, "adherence to the innovative categories of kabbalah was tantamount to cultivating the freedom of interpretation necessary if one were to pass from one worldview to another."[51] Bonfil argued, among other things, that Kabbalah served to fill the vacuum left by a decline in allegiance to medieval modes of thought and identity, and helped to anticipate the secularizing and individualizing tendencies that would eventually come to characterize modernity.

Whatever the reasons for the successful diffusion of Kabbalah amongst Italian Jewry, it would be inaccurate to imagine that Kabbalah was transformed overnight from an esoteric to an exoteric tradition. After all, in the case of the literature of the Zohar, to a very significant extent it *remained* recondite by its very nature. With its use of Aramaic, and its opaque mythic and symbolic qualities, the Zohar did not suddenly become easier to comprehend for the uninitiated simply by virtue of its having been printed. Indeed, the popularization of Kabbalah in the Italian context and elsewhere must be understood in *relative* terms, as many of those who sought out kabbalistic works were, by definition, out of the ordinary. It is rather that the door had been opened to a far broader community of individuals who would subject the Zohar and other kabbalistic treatises to vernacular translations, interpretations, adaptations, lexical and thematic guides to study, and to various novel uses that rendered them far more revealed than concealed – even as some would continue to perpetuate the older tradition of concealment.

KABBALAH IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The greatest number of Iberian exiles made their way to the Ottoman Empire, where they were fortunate to find a far safer haven than was the case elsewhere, due to the welcome provided to them by Sultan Bayazid II. As a result, along with Jewish life as a whole, kabbalistic life flourished in ways that were unparalleled elsewhere, particularly in the sixteenth century. While Jerusalem was a center of some kabbalistic activity at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the small Galilean village of Safed, especially, was home to an extraordinary renaissance of Jewish life between

agency was particularly appealing in the second half of the sixteenth century in Italy for several reasons, including increased persecution of Italian Jewry in connection with the Counter-Reformation, such as the burning and censorship of Jewish books; and the challenges to social cohesion within the Jewish community as a result of growing alienation of the majority from the communal elite and communal authorities. In connection with these questions, also see Weinstein, *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity*.

[51] Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 171.

the 1530s and approximately 1590.[52] In the wake of the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluks in 1516–17, Jews from various parts of Europe, North Africa, and other parts of the Ottoman Empire were able to migrate freely to Palestine. Joining other Jews who had arrived in Safed even earlier, they established a community that flourished demographically, economically, culturally, and religiously. While religious creativity took numerous forms, Safed established itself as the foremost center of kabbalistic learning and life. A remarkable constellation of scholars and teachers transformed what had hitherto been a rather obscure village into a vibrant, creative, pietistic community, one that would exert immeasurable influence upon subsequent generations of Near Eastern and European Jews.

Among the many forces at work in driving this creativity and dynamism was an urgent sense of crisis and opportunity. The sense of crisis was engendered by the widespread conviction among kabbalists that theirs was a generation especially marked by transgression – personal and collective. Doubtless, among the factors contributing to this sense of culpability was the presence in Safed of numerous *conversos*, Iberian Jews who had under compulsion become Christians, at least in name. In addition, individuals who had arrived in Safed from many parts of Christian Europe were keenly aware that most Jews remained in a state of *galut* – that is, exile. We presume that this contributed to the general feeling of anxiety and collective responsibility. The sense of *opportunity* was driven by the belief that penitence, prayer, and ritual devotion could reverse the consequences of sin by cleansing one's soul and strengthening it; extricate the female dimension of divinity, the *Shekhinah*, from Her state of exile; and, at least in the view of some, provide the ground for national and cosmic redemption. This dramatic belief in the theurgic efficacy of proper behavior was rooted in the well-known kabbalistic conviction that righteous action serves to re-establish intimacy between an individual and the Divine, just as it simultaneously restores harmony and balance *within* the realm of divinity. The present discussion seeks to illuminate several of the critical features of Safed kabbalistic life through a focus on these themes.

Despite the fact that they were living in the Land of Israel, the kabbalists of Safed nevertheless possessed a powerful sense of *galut*, as noted. This expressed itself most characteristically through the kabbalistic conception of the "exile of the *Shekhinah*." According to this central kabbalistic

[52] Concerning the historical circumstances that gave rise to the Safed community, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 41–51. An Ottoman kabbalist of this period of particular importance, but one who was not part of the Safed renaissance, was Meir ibn Gabbai (1480 – after 1540). Ibn Gabbai was one of the most influential exponents of the theosophical Kabbalah emanating from Spain, as expressed in his works *Tola'at Ya'akov* and *Avodat ha-Qodesh*.

notion, the union and harmony that ideally characterizes the relationship between *Shekhinah* and her male lover *Tiferet* is ruptured as a result of human sin. The *Shekhinah* is cut off from Her source of nourishment and remains exiled from the rest of the divine pleroma, the other *sefirot*. Even though earlier kabbalists had spoken of the exile of the *Shekhinah*, it was Safed mystics, now especially gripped by a sense of culpability, who took up this theme with even greater fervor. In the process they exhibited a deeply and personally felt identification with the breach within divinity, and particularly with the misery and torment of the *Shekhinah*.

I want to illustrate these themes by describing two of the many distinctive penitential rituals that emerged in Safed, including the practice of *gerushin* ("exiles"), or peregrinations that were carried out in and around the environs of Safed. This ritual was innovated by two of the most prominent kabbalists in Safed, the aforementioned Moses Cordovero and his brother-in-law Solomon Alkabets (1505–76). Cordovero and Alkabets would journey to the putative gravesites of prominent biblical figures and rabbis with whose souls they sought to commune, in the course of which they would self-consciously imitate the humbled and downtrodden *Shekhinah*:

> A person should exile himself from place to place for the sake of Heaven, and in this way he will become a vessel for the exiled *Shekhinah* . . . he should humble his heart in exile and bind himself to the Torah, and then the *Shekhinah* will accompany him. And he should carry out *gerushin* by exiling himself from his house of rest constantly, after the fashion of Rabbi Shimon [bar Yoḥai] and his company, who exiled themselves in order to study the Torah. And how much better is he who bruises his feet wandering from place to place without horse and cart . . . for he breaks his body in the service of the Most High.[53]

By this self-imposed act of exile and suffering in which one should "walk barefooted in the mystery of the *Shekhinah*,"[54] a person expresses as well as experiences the humiliation to which the *Shekhinah* has Herself been subjected. It serves as a form of genuine penitential self-affliction, an opportunity to "break one's body" and to bruise one's feet in the dust, just as the bruised and suffering *Shekhinah* lies in the dust. Yet by such self-imposed exiles one provided *comfort* for the *Shekhinah*, as the heart becomes a dwelling place for Her to rest. Thus, while one subjected the body to shame and humiliation in a powerful act of empathy, at the same time the humbled body served as a vessel in which She found consolation. Even more, these peregrinations were intended to result in an experience of automatic speech in which the voice of the individual whose grave one was visiting would speak through one's own

[53] Moses Cordovero, *Tomer Devorah* (Venice, 1589), ch. 9.
[54] Moses Cordovero, *Sefer Gerushin* (Venice, 1602).

mouth, instructing an adept in the esoteric meaning of verses from the Torah. This practice exemplifies a number of prominent features of Safed mystical life: preoccupation with personal spiritual exile and the desire to perform ascetic, penitential acts; profound distress over the fate of the *Shekhinah*; an intimate sense of identification with the heroes of the Zohar; and the phenomenon of personal revelatory experience through the medium of involuntary, automatic speech.

Among the great many other practices that exemplify these themes, I want to adduce another innovative ritual, the midnight vigil. Based on earlier rabbinic and zoharic motifs, midnight was considered a "favored time" for communing with God. For example, Elijah de Vidas (d. *c*.1593), Cordovero's most prominent student and the author of *Reshit Ḥokhmah*, an encyclopedic compendium of kabbalistic ethics, taught as follows:

> One who wishes to sanctify himself when he arises at midnight ought to feel the distress of the *Shekhinah*, weep and mourn over the destruction of the Sanctuary; he should weep and mourn on account of the desecration of God's name as well as on account of our sins, which prolong the exile of the *Shekhinah*. For at midnight, the Holy One, blessed be He, remembers Israel, which is in exile.[55]

Elsewhere, de Vidas writes that "on account of our sins She falls lower, and by means of our righteous deeds She becomes strengthened . . . Even though there is no [perfect] intra-divine marriage [between *Tiferet* and *Shekhinah*] in our state of exile, we must still fortify Her through acts of unification that provide Her with some degree of inspiration."[56]

Accounts of the activities of the aforementioned Abraham Berukhim, among the important kabbalists who came to Safed by way of Morocco, attest to the significance in Safed of the midnight vigil:

> There was a certain individual here in Safed, may it be rebuilt and re-established speedily in our day, whose name was the honored Abraham ha-Levi [Berukhim] . . . Every midnight he would rise and make the round of all the streets, raising his voice and crying out bitterly: "Rise in order to honor God's name, for the *Shekhinah* is in exile, and our holy Sanctuary has been consumed by fire, and Israel is in great distress!"[57]

[55] Elijah de Vidas, *Reshit Ḥokhmah* (Venice, 1579), "Gate of Holiness," ch. 7, trans. in Lawrence Fine, *Safed Spirituality: Rules of Mystical Piety, the Beginning of Wisdom* (Mahwah, NJ, 1983), 107.

[56] Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, 149.

[57] Ḥayyim Vital, *Sefer ha-Ari ve-Gurav* (Jerusalem, 1992), 86. This is an edition of the traditions preserved by Solomon Shlomiel of Dresnitz, a Bohemian Jew who came to Safed at the beginning of the seventeenth century and wrote letters home about what he experienced there. Despite the somewhat legendary nature of Dresnitz's work, this tradition undoubtedly reflects practices that emerged in Safed.

Berukhim speaks of the midnight vigil as an established practice: "Most of the scholars of Torah, when they arise in the middle of the night in order to study, sit upon the ground, wrap themselves in black, mourning and weeping on account of the destruction of the Temple. Such is also the custom of the Fellowship of Penitents in the afternoon service of the New Moon."[58] These traditions illuminate a number of critical features of Safed Kabbalah, including the fact that a sense of transgression and the desire to atone assumed a central place in the lives of these individuals, the impressive proliferation of ritual practices, as well as a crucial social dimension in which we see the development of a number of intentional fellowships or *ḥavurot*.

ISAAC LURIA AND HIS KABBALISTIC FELLOWSHIP

Until his death in 1570, Moses Cordovero was at the center of kabbalistic life in Safed, known not only as a great scholar and remarkably prolific author, but also as the teacher of a small but important circle of kabbalists.[59] The most influential such fellowship, however, was the one that coalesced around Isaac Luria, who arrived in Safed approximately six months before Cordovero died.[60] Born in Jerusalem, Luria spent most of

[58] Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 51.

[59] On Cordovero, see Bracha Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero* [Hebrew] (Beersheva, 1995); Zohar Raviv, *Decoding the Dogma within the Enigma: The Life, Works, Mystical Piety and Systematic Thought of Rabbi Moses Cordoeiro (aka Cordovero; Safed, Israel, 1522–1570)* (Saarbrucken, 2008).

[60] For studies of Lurianic Kabbalah, see Daniel Abrams, ed., *Lurianic Kabbalah: Collected Studies by Gershom Scholem* [Hebrew] (Los Angeles, 2008); Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*; Shaul Magid, *Metaphysics and Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbalah* (Bloomington, IN, 2008); Jonathan Garb, *Shamanic Trance in Modern Kabbalah* (Chicago, 2011); Ronit Meroz, "Faithful Transmission Versus Innovation: Luria and His Disciples," in Peter Schafer and Joseph Dan, eds., *Gershom Scholem's "Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism" Fifty Years After* (Tübingen, 1993), 257–74; Ronit Meroz, "Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching" (Ph. D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988); Yehudah Liebes, "'Two Young Roes of a Doe': The Secret Sermon of Isaac Luria Before His Death" [Hebrew], *Meḥkerei Yerushalayim* 10 (1992), 67–119; J. H. Chajes, *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism* (Philadelphia, 2003). For a study of the *repercussions* of Lurianic Kabbalah, and the reasons for its popularity and influence in the early modern period and beyond, see Weinstein, *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity*. Among other things, Weinstein proposes a wide range of connections between features of Lurianic Kabbalah and early modern European Catholicism: "One of the central claims of my book is that one cannot understand the diffusion of Lurianic Kabbalah, and of the ethical literature that blossomed in its wake, without the intimate and profound existence of common religious developments to the Jewish and Catholic worlds in early modern Europe" (20). In this connection, see the review of Weinstein's book by

his life in Egypt where he had moved as a young child with his mother, following the death of his father. In Egypt, Luria studied under that country's most prominent rabbi, David ibn Zimra (*c*.1480–1573), and was active in a circle of scholars around ibn Zimra in Cairo. Luria collaborated in the writing of various works of Jewish law, and eventually began to pursue an interest in Kabbalah. He spent his last years in Egypt largely in contemplative seclusion on a small island in the Nile, returning home to his family on the Sabbath. It is presumably during this period that he began to develop his distinctive kabbalistic ideas and practices.

When he arrived in Safed he became a student of Cordovero's until the latter's death, after which he quickly became the most prominent kabbalistic teacher in Safed, attracting 40 or so close disciples whom he taught in intimate fashion. While Luria himself wrote very little, several of his disciples recorded extensive versions of his teachings, the best-known of which are those by Ḥayyim Vital (1542–1620). The elaborate depictions of Luria himself provide evidence that he was a strikingly charismatic figure, revered for his saintly ethical practices as well as for his capacity to experience heavenly revelations from Elijah and other prophets, and deceased rabbis. Luria died prematurely at the age of 38, after living in Safed for no more than three years. While his death left his disciples bereft, his personal charisma, his complex and distinctive mythic teachings, along with the myriad of ritual and pietistic practices that he innovated, exerted a profound and lasting effect virtually everywhere that Jews lived, including eastern Europe, both before and after the advent of Hasidism.

Among the most significant roles Luria played in the lives of his disciples was that of physician of the soul. Before they could practice rituals intended to enable them to bind their souls to the divine realm and to repair that realm in accordance with the teachings of Lurianic mythology, his students had first to mend their own souls, to purify and cleanse them of all imperfection. No one whose own soul had failed to achieve a level of purification could hope to engage successfully in the elaborate contemplative rituals that Luria taught. Luria, in fact, provided his followers with highly detailed rites of atonement, penitential acts known as *tikkunei 'avonot* ("amends of sins"), the purpose of which was to "mend [their] soul" and "cleanse [them] of the filth of the disease of [their] sins." Luria himself served as the diagnostician and healer of diseased souls:

David Malkiel, "Rapture and Rupture: Kabbalah and the Reformation of Early Modern Judaism," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 103, 1 (Winter, 2013), 107–21. For a study of an important kabbalistic center in eighteenth-century Jerusalem that was rooted in Lurianic Kabbalah, see Pinchas Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El* (Oxford, 2008).

He would not reveal any of the mysteries of this holy knowledge to one in whose soul he perceived – with the aid of the Holy Spirit [*ru'ah ha-kodesh*], a blemish – until he gave him penitential acts to straighten out all he did crookedly. And like the expert doctor who prescribes for each sick person the proper medicine to cure this illness, so too [Isaac Luria], may he rest in peace, used to recognize the sin, tell him where he had incurred a blemish, and prescribe for him the penitential act needed for this transgression in order to cleanse his soul, so that he could receive the divine light.[61]

The primary manner by which Luria was able to discern sin was through the divinatory technique of metoposcopy, accomplished in his case by interpreting the meaning of the appearance of Hebrew letters on the forehead! He "could also recognize the letters on the forehead and was adept at the science of physiognomy, as well as at [recognizing] the lights that are upon the skin and body of an individual." The appearance of various letters and their combinations in the form of lights signified that one had performed corresponding *mitzvot*, while the absence of letters indicated transgression, whether by way of acts of commission or of omission. Equipped with this and other diagnostic skills, Luria provided his disciples with penitential exercises that varied according to the transgression in need of expiation. These included, for example, haughtiness, dishonoring one's parents, humiliating another individual, speaking ill of the dead, anger, and various types of illicit sexual behaviors. The penitential remedies that he prescribed share much in common with traditions deriving from the German Jewish Pietists (*Hasidei Ashkenaz*) of the thirteenth century, including extensive fasting, donning of sackcloth and ashes, sleeping on the ground, flagellation, immersion in water, lying upon nettles, and rolling undressed in the snow! Accompanied by precise meditative intentions (*kavanot*), these penitences served to repair injury to the Divine brought about by sin, cleansed the soul by eliminating defilement, and helped to render an adept qualified to become a vessel for divine inspiration.

In addition to helping them to repair their souls through penitential exercises and the cultivation of positive spiritual traits, Luria instructed his disciples in all manner of ritual practices, many of them involving kabbalistic *kavanot* in fulfillment of the *mitzvot*, as well as numerous extra-halakhic rites. Among the most important in the latter category was the practice of *yiḥudim* ("unifications"), in which disciples were instructed to prostrate themselves upon the graves of deceased sages so as to commune and cleave "soul to soul." As in the case of Cordovero's *gerushin*, one of the goals of successful practice was to have an experience of automatic speech

[61] Quoted in Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 152–3.

in which the voice of the deceased spoke through one's own mouth, imparting kabbalistic revelations of the Torah. In the sphere of interpersonal relations, Luria was deeply concerned that his disciples treat one another with respect and love, and avoid jealousy, arrogance, and immodesty. Luria appears to have regarded himself as the reincarnation or *gilgul* of Shimon bar Yoḥai, and his closest disciples to be the reincarnated souls of Shimon bar Yoḥai's companions, as depicted in the narratives of the Zohar. As such, they believed that they were replicating and potentially completing the redemptive work of an earlier generation of Pietists. In this connection, Luria was regarded by his disciples as having a messianic role, that is, as the "Messiah, son of Joseph," who radiated the light of the Torah, and whose ability to provide the kind of guidance described above would serve to usher in messianic redemption.

Alas, Luria's early death in 1572 cut short these grand kabbalistic aspirations. Ḥayyim Vital and Joseph ibn Tabul, the latter among Safed's émigrés from Morocco, would seek to perpetuate their teacher's legacy, but before long the individuals that had comprised the Lurianic fellowship scattered in different directions. Still, the Lurianic legacy loomed large in manifold ways. The charismatic and saintly image of Isaac Luria was preserved and disseminated in two collections of hagiography that emerged in the seventeenth century, becoming widely popular throughout the Jewish world, including North Africa, Italy, and eastern Europe.[62] The great many ritual and liturgical innovations that were produced in Safed by Luria and others, involving both halakhic and extra-halakhic practices, permeated the daily religious life of many Jewish communities all over the Jewish world, beginning in the latter two decades of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth. Here the rich, mutual influences between and amongst these several centers of kabbalistic life are particularly apparent. And we have already noted the way in which highly mythic Lurianic ideas were adapted in scholastic ways by an important group of Italian kabbalists in the seventeenth century. In an altogether different manner, Lurianic traditions also played an important role in the ideologies and practices of the followers of the Turkish messianic pretender, Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76).

A final word about sixteenth-century Safed is in order. With respect to the question of esotericism vs. exotericism, and elitism vs. egalitarianism,

[62] Concerning these works, *Shivḥe ha-Ari* and *Toldot ha-Ari*, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 85–7, 385 nn. 18–21, and the bibliography cited there. See also Eitan Fishbane, "Perceptions of Greatness: Constructions of the Holy Man in *Shivḥei ha-Ari*," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 27 (2012), 195–221, ed. Daniel Abrams.

in Safed we find all of these simultaneously. In Luria's case, he sought vigorously to limit himself to a very small group of disciples whom he hoped would be worthy of his teaching. With respect to the earlier circle around Moses Cordovero, this seems to have been much less of an issue. Indeed, the preponderance of the evidence we have suggests that kabbalistic ideas and practices were widespread in Safed, including among ordinary folk and even women. This tendency is attested most persuasively by an innovative genre of popular works of "ethical Kabbalah" (*musar ha-Kabbalit*) authored by Elijah de Vidas, Ḥayyim Vital, and Eleazar Azikri, as well as Cordovero himself. As we will see below, this new genre would exert a great impact upon Jewry over the next several centuries.[63]

KABBALAH IN EASTERN EUROPE: OVERVIEW

While there is evidence of Jewish mystical literary traditions in the form of *Ḥasidut Ashkenaz* (medieval German-Jewish Pietism) reaching eastern Europe as early as the thirteenth century, Kabbalah did not take root there in any significant way until the seventeenth century. Among the earliest examples of eastern European kabbalistic authorship in the post-Expulsion period is *Shoshan Sodot* by Moshe ben Ya'akov of Kiev (b. *c.*1493), a vast anthology of textual materials that was based primarily on Byzantine kabbalistic traditions, and which was concerned particularly with esoteric explanations of the *mitzvot*. This work preserved important kabbalistic materials, some of which are otherwise unknown.[64] The most important influences upon mystical speculation and practice in eastern Europe, however, emanated from the two prominent "schools" that had flourished in sixteenth-century Safed, those of Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria. It is hard to overstate the influence that these two original kabbalistic figures had upon the subsequent history of Kabbalah.[65] By the end of the seventeenth century, various combinations and configurations of their teachings became firmly rooted in eastern Europe, and began to transform its spiritual landscape.

[63] For a broad survey of ethics in kabbalistic tradition, see Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism and Jewish Ethics* (Seattle, 1986). See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford, 2006), for an inquiry into specialized problems in the nexus between Kabbalah and ethics.

[64] Published in Koretz, 1784. See Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 440 n. 30.

[65] For a discussion of the early development of Kabbalah in eastern Europe, see Jacob Elbaum, *Openness and Seclusion*: Spiritual and Literary Creativity in Poland and Germany in the Late Sixteenth Century [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1990), 183–222.

THE CORDOVERIAN SCHOOL

Moses Cordovero's teachings penetrated eastern Europe earlier than those of Isaac Luria. As one measure of this development, we turn again to the history of Hebrew printing.[66] Cordovero's most influential book, *Pardes Rimonim*, was published in Krakow as early as 1592, a mere eight years after its initial publication in Salonika. Even though *Pardes Rimonim* itself would not appear in further editions in eastern Europe until the 1780s, Cordovero's interpretation of kabbalistic tradition found expression there in other ways. His *'Or Ne'erav*, a book clearly intended for a more general readership, appeared in print in Krakow in 1647 and in Fuerth (Germany) in 1701. His better-known popularizing work, *Tomer Devorah*, was published in Prague in 1621, and the ethical kabbalistic compendium of Elijah de Vidas, *Reshit Ḥokhmah*, based significantly on Cordoverian teachings, was published in Krakow as early as 1593. The immense popularity of the latter is evidenced not only by the number of times it was reprinted throughout Europe, but even more by the number of times its two different condensations were published, as *Reshit Ḥokhmah ha-Katsar* and *Tapuḥei Zahav*. All of this is to say that Cordovero's teachings began to permeate eastern European Jewry primarily by way of versions accessible and appealing to a non-elite audience. Most importantly, one of the critical features of these popularizations was that they focused on the *practical* dimensions of kabbalistic behavior – that is, ritual, liturgical, devotional, and halakhic acts – while providing an attenuated, simpler rendition of kabbalistic myth and theology. The latter, though, was enough to convey to readers and practitioners that religious acts accompanied by kabbalistic contemplative intentionality (*kavanot*) richly elevated the significance of their devotion. Now, devotional acts could be seen as being imbued with theurgic and cosmic meaning, the raising-up of the exiled *Shekhinah*, the unification of the various qualities of the Godhead, helping to facilitate redemption, and bringing individuals themselves in proper alignment with the Divine.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that the vast majority of eastern European Jewish thinkers took an active interest in Kabbalah by the beginning of the early seventeenth century, at the same time as enthusiasm for philosophical approaches waned in Ashkenaz. Arguably, the most influential figure to introduce kabbalistic tradition to eastern European Jewish culture was Isaiah Horowitz (1565–1630), a member of one of Ashkenazic Jewry's most prominent rabbinical families. Born in Prague, and educated in Poland, Horowitz served as rabbi in a number of prominent Jewish communities before becoming the chief Ashkenazic rabbi of Jerusalem in 1621. He is best known as the author of *Shnei Luḥot ha-Brit*,

[66] Ibid, 193–200.

published for the first time in Amsterdam in 1648, and in numerous subsequent editions. This massive, encyclopedic compilation incorporated elaborate discussion of virtually every conceivable kabbalistic topic, and at just about every level of scrutiny, from the most theoretical and abstract to the most practical dimensions of ritual and ethical behavior. Like certain other early kabbalistic works produced in Poland, this book was very much a compendium, insofar as it brought between its covers an exceedingly wide range of earlier textual materials, a veritable library of kabbalistic collectanea. While Horowitz's work was firmly grounded in the Cordoverian theological tradition, he was also intimately familiar with Lurianic Kabbalah, which he held in high esteem and which to a less overt extent he integrated into *Shnei Luḥot ha-Brit*.[67] As with the case of *Reshit Ḥokhmah*, both the enormous size and the great appeal of this work led to a condensed version, *Kitzur Shnei Luḥot ha-Brit*, published numerous times.

Yet another work that exerted great influence upon European Jewry at the beginning of the eighteenth century was Tsvi Hirsch Koidanover's *Kav ha-Yashar*, based in significant part on the writing of his father, Aaron Samuel Koidanover (1614–76), and his teacher Joseph ben Judah of Dubno. Born in Vilna, Koidanover settled in Frankfurt where his book was initially published in 1705, seven years before his death. Wildly popular, *Kav ha-Yashar* was republished in some eighty editions through the nineteenth century. While drawing upon a wide range of Jewish esoteric traditions, its most important influence was the ethical Kabbalah of the Cordoverian school, including *Tomer Devorah, Reshit Ḥokhmah*, and *Shnei Luḥot ha-Brit. Kav ha-Yashar* is characterized by an unrelenting concern with the antagonism between the cosmic forces of good and evil, and a corresponding insistence on the need for individuals to pursue a rigorously penitential, ascetic life. These views are set within a kabbalistic framework in which every act one performs either enhances the power of the realm of evil, or strengthens the power of the Divine. The immense popularity of this book attests to the powerful appeal these intensely moralistic and dualistic views exerted upon Ashkenazic Jewry. Indeed, a strong ascetic tendency was one of the prominent features of the fusion of ethics and Kabbalah in the religious culture under consideration.[68]

[67] Concerning Horowitz, see Miles Krassen, *Isaiah Horowitz: The Generations of Adam* (New York, 1996); Elliot Wolfson, "The Influence of the Ari on the Shlah" [Hebrew], *Mehkere Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisrael* 10 (1992), 423–48; Joseph Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller: Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* (Oxford, 2004), 51–5; and bibliography in Gershon Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe (YEJEE)* (New Haven, 2008), 756.

[68] Concerning this work, see Jean Baumgarten, "Between Translation and Commentary: The Bilingual Editions of the *Kav ha-Yashar* by Tsvi Hirsch Koidanover," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3, 3 (2004), 269–87; Moshe Idel,

Further evidence of the growing embrace of Kabbalah among Ashkenazic Jews is the translation of some of this literature into the Yiddish vernacular. This development is attested by the translation and adaptation into Yiddish of portions of the Zohar, the *Naḥalat Tsvi* produced by Yerachmiel Chotsch, published for the first time in Frankfurt in 1711. This work, too, was reprinted in dozens of editions, a measure of its extraordinary appeal. As was the case with Koidanover and *Kav ha-Yashar*, Chotsch was sensitive to the original nature of kabbalistic traditions and deliberately omitted passages he regarded as too esoteric and complex for his intended readership of ordinary men, and women. Thus, women too had access to parts of the Zohar that had been shorn of their complex, mythic, and speculative qualities. *Tkhines*, the genre of women's petitionary prayers in Yiddish that evolved in Europe from the seventeenth century forward, incorporate and reflect elements of Kabbalah, including material from *Naḥalat Tsvi*.[69] In all of these literary developments, we see the simultaneous attraction of Kabbalah in eastern Europe at both the level of the elite and the level of ordinary people. In the end, it is not possible to altogether separate these two levels. For example, works such as Horowitz's *Shnei Luḥot ha-Brit* came to serve as grist for rabbinic sermons, ethical handbooks, and kabbalistically infused prayer books (including Horowitz's own *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*), as well as other vehicles of popularization.

Importantly, just as we saw that the growing public interest in kabbalistic teachings in Italy provoked controversy, so too in eastern Europe the status of Kabbalah became an ongoing matter of debate. For example, in his book *Zera Berakh*, Berekhia Berakh ben Isaac Eisik (d. 1663), the official preacher of the Krakow community in the middle of the seventeenth century, and himself an admirer of Kabbalah, wrote about the "scandal" of making an esoteric tradition widely accessible. Employing virtually the same arguments as Leon Modena had in Italy, Berakh was outraged that "now a few people who are famous in their own eyes use the crown of Torah as a tool to earn a living and compose books about Kabbalah," in the

"On Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Koidanover's *Sefer Qav ha-Yashar*," in Karl E. Grozinger, ed., *Judische Kultur in Frankfurt am Main von den Anfangen bis zur Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden, 1997), 123–33; Rachel Elior, "Koidanover, Aharon Shemu'el and Tsevi Hirsch," in *YEJEE*, 914–15.

[69] On this subject, see Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston, 1998); Weissler, "Measuring Graves and Laying Wicks," in Lawrence Fine, ed., *Judaism in Practice: From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, 2001), 61–73. For a study of women in the Sabbatean movement, see Ada Rapoport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbati Zevi, 1666–1816* (Oxford, 2011).

course of which "they reveal the hidden and the mysterious before the great and the small." Even more, "they mix their own words that they invent with their heart with the words of the Kabbalah to the point where one cannot tell which are the words of the true sages and which the words that were added."[70] Such views, however, failed to impede the growing embrace of Kabbalah in Poland and elsewhere.

In this connection, mention should also be made of the role of Sabbateanism. On the one hand, Sabbateanism served to introduce large numbers of individuals in eastern Europe to its own idiosyncratic version of kabbalistic ideas and practices. At the same time, Sabbateanism was the object of the most intense ridicule and condemnation by such eminent rabbinic figures as Jacob Sasportas (1610–98), Moses Ḥagiz (1671–1751), and Jacob Emden (1697–1776). While these individuals were themselves supporters of Kabbalah to one degree or another, some critics of Sabbateanism, including, for example, Jacob Frances (1615–67), repudiated not only this movement but also Kabbalah altogether.[71]

THE LURIANIC SCHOOL

Although Lurianic Kabbalah took longer to make its full impact felt in eastern Europe, with rather limited circulation of Lurianic manuscripts and some important printed books in the seventeenth century, we can nevertheless discern a similar pattern to that of Cordoverian Kabbalah. That is, these teachings took at least two different tracks, one along the lines of elite scholarship, and the other at the level of popularization. A significant example of the former is Naftali Bachrach (first half of the seventeenth century) who was born in Frankfurt, but who spent a number of years in Poland, where he studied Kabbalah. His work *'Emek ha-Melekh* (Amsterdam, 1648) comprises a wide-ranging articulation of Lurianic theology, based significantly on the version of Luria's teachings as espoused by Israel Sarug's *Limmudei 'Atzilut*.[72] Suffused with messianic enthusiasm,

[70] Quoted in Rosman, "Innovative Tradition: Jewish Culture in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth," in D. Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews* (New York, 2002), 246.

[71] See Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah*, 184; Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, 1973); Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), chs. 5–6; Rachel Elior, *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism* (Oxford, 2006), 89–90; and Boaz Huss's discussion of Jacob Emden's condemnation of Sabbateanism, as well as Emden's critique of the role of the Zohar in that movement, online at: http://earlymodern.org/workshops/summer2004/videos.php.

[72] Concerning Israel Sarug and the question of his personal relationship to Isaac Luria, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 361. *Limmudei 'Atzilut* was not printed until 1897, and was incorrectly attributed to Ḥayyim Vital.

'Emek ha-Melekh had a substantial influence upon subsequent kabbalists – including theologians of Habad mysticism, as well as Elijah Gaon – as it came to be regarded as an authoritative exposition of Lurianic teachings.[73] It is worth pointing out that there were vigorous differences of opinion among later kabbalists over whether it was fitting to synthesize Cordoverian and Lurianic approaches. A prominent example of an individual who did just that was Shabetai Sheftel Horowitz (*c.*1561–1619), as did his cousin, Isaiah Horowitz, as mentioned earlier. Shabetai's work *Shefa Tal* draws upon both Cordovero's teachings and Lurianic conceptions as articulated by Joseph ibn Tabul, one of Luria's most important students, as well as Israel Sarug.[74]

A different manifestation of elite Lurianic scholarship and practice may be seen in certain of the conventicles, or *kloyzen*, that emerged in Europe. The most prominent and influential *kabbalistic* example of this phenomenon was the Galician *kloyz* at Brody. The Brody community comprised a privately endowed, exclusive assembly of elite scholars and their students. These individuals came together out of a commitment to an exceptionally rigorous study of Lurianic writings, an ascetically oriented piety, and a life of prayer in accordance with Lurianic *kavanot*. In a quasi-monastic way, the scholars at Brody resided at the *kloyz* for the entire week apart from their families, except for the Sabbath. Its leaders, including Ḥayyim Zanz and Moses Ostrer, supported the printing of Lurianic writings, resulting in the first appearance of a number of the classical versions of these texts at the nearby printing house in Koretz in the 1780s.[75]

Over the course of time, Lurianic Kabbalah exerted great influence in a far broader manner by way of permeating Jewish liturgical works of various types. These included prayer books suffused with Lurianic features; the enormously popular genre of *tikkunim* for special occasions and festivals, such as *Tikkun Leil Shavu'ot, Tikkun Leil Hoshanah Rabbah, Tiqqun Hatzot*, and *Tikkunei Teshuvah*; special rites at gravesites; meditative instructions (*kavanot*), and more. These books, often published in inexpensive formats, appeared in dozens of editions, attesting to the degree to which they had an impact upon the consciousness of the masses who were not necessarily self-identifying kabbalists. In addition, beginning in the

[73] Concerning Bachrach, see Giller, *Reading Zohar*, 21, 26; Yehuda Liebes, "On the Image, Writings, and Kabbalah of the Author of *Emek ha-Melekh*," in Y. Liebes and R. Elior, eds., *Lurianic Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1992) [Hebrew], 103–39.

[74] Elbaum, *Seclusion and Openness*, 190.

[75] See Elhanan Reiner, "Wealth, Social Position and the Study of Torah: The Status of the *Kloiz* in East European Jewish Society in the Early Modern Period" [Hebrew], *Zion* 57, 3 (1993), 287–328; Sharon Flatto, *The Kabbalistic Culture of Eighteenth-Century Prague* (Oxford, 2010), 100–6.

seventeenth century, popular preachers, itinerant *magidim*, folk healers, and magic workers known as *Ba'ale Shem* also brought a complex mixture of popular folk traditions, magic, and mysticism, to communities throughout Polish Jewry.[76]

All of these developments would contribute in the most consequential ways to the emerging Hasidic movement by the middle of the eighteenth century. While Hasidism manifested its own distinctive and defining features, it was also the beneficiary of the rich, variegated kabbalistic traditions of the preceding centuries. Classical Hasidism, of course, represented the most dramatic result of a long journey of Jewish mystical tradition, from concealment to greater and greater degrees of popular and public expression. At the same time, much of classical Hasidic thought exhibits deep theological and conceptual complexity, including, for example, the teachings of Dov Ber, the Magid of Mezerich, early Habad writings, Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav, and the Lurianic-suffused approach of Tsvi Hirsch Eichenstein, the Zidatchover rebbe. Hasidism preserved, as well, the original kabbalistic intuition that silence and mystery rests at the heart of the human spiritual quest.

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[76] See Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004).

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CHAPTER 17

MAGIC, MYSTICISM, AND POPULAR BELIEF IN JEWISH CULTURE (1500–1815)

J. H. CHAJES

The title of this chapter is likely to conjure up notions in the mind of the reader that are best dispelled at the outset. The most prominent and pernicious is that the following will take up various aspects of the "supernatural" in early modern Jewish culture. As the very category of the supernatural was under construction only toward the end of the period under consideration, it would be a disservice to the *mentalité* of the men and women who lived in these centuries to project our views anachronistically upon them. For them, there was nothing "supernatural" but God, creator of all things "natural" – and creation/nature included angels, demons, and souls, as well as signatures and sympathies governed by hidden pathways established by resemblance. Magic, whether efficacious by appeal to angels or demons, or by the exploitation of these hidden – literally "occult" – pathways, was therefore conceived as an entirely natural pursuit until it became inscribed in the newly constructed realm of the "supernatural," a process that began during the seventeenth century and continued well into the twentieth.[1]

It is true that academic medicine, practiced by university-trained physicians including the well-known Jewish graduates of the University of Padua, set out in new directions during the early modern period. University doctors campaigned vigorously against practitioners of folk medicine, as may be seen in the invectives directed against them by the Jewish physician Tobias Cohn (1652–1729) in his encyclopedic work *Ma'aseh Tuvia* (Venice, 1707). Nevertheless, if judged purely on the basis of efficacy, such physicians enjoyed absolutely no advantage over other types of healers until the innovations in medications and anesthetics that

[1] See Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997); J. H. Chajes, "*Entzauberung* and Jewish Modernity: On 'Magic,' Enlightenment, and Faith," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007), 191–200; John Henry, "The Fragmentation of Renaissance Occultism and the Decline of Magic," *History of Science* 46 (2008), 1–48.

came only in the late nineteenth century.[2] The medical pluralism of the early modern period makes a good deal more sense when the actual situation on the ground, so to speak, is properly understood. Jews in the early modern period who consulted "wise women" and *ba'alei shem* ("Masters of the Name [of God]") for "magical" cures for their illnesses and suffering had every bit as much (or as little) hope for recovery as those who had access to the learned scholars of Galen and Aristotle, the university-trained physicians. The choice to go with a particular healer was not – nor could it have been – based on efficacy, but was rather determined by other factors, from availability to social class.[3]

Magic was ubiquitous amongst early modern Jews. Jewish rituals and ritual objects were commonly conceived of in magical terms, as actions or artefacts that could provide some form of material benefit as a result of the exploitation of an occult pathway.[4] There was the everyday, popular magic of healers and diviners, of charms and remedies. And there was learned magic as well. Jews retained ancient magical traditions, preserved in manuscripts passed down over the generations by rabbinic scholars who forayed into such esoteric lore. Most of the ancient Jewish learned magical texts that were known in the early modern period survived thanks to copies made by the so-called *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* (German Pietists) of the twelfth-century Rhineland.[5] These German Pietists preserved ancient Jewish magical traditions and also developed their own esoteric teachings and practices, often relating to divine names and the encoded numerological secrets of sacred Hebrew texts. Such linguistic forms of esotericism could be wedded to earthly techniques quite literally, as evinced by the various

[2] See Roy Porter, "The Eighteenth Century," in Lawrence I. Conrad, Michael Neve, Vivian Nutton, Roy Porter, and Andrew Wear, eds., *The Western Medical Tradition: 800 B.C.–1800 A.D.* (Cambridge, 1995), 371–476.

[3] See Nimrod Zinger, "'Who Knows What the Cause Is?': 'Natural' and 'Unnatural' Causes for Illness in the Writings of *Ba'alei Shem*, Doctors and Patients among German Jews in the Eighteenth Century," in Maria Diemling and Giuseppe Veltri, eds., *The Jewish Body: Corporeality, Society, and Identity in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period* (Leiden, 2009), 127–55.

[4] See Moshe Idel, "On Judaism, Jewish Mysticism and Magic," in Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg, eds., *Envisioning Magic* (Leiden, 1997), 195–214.

[5] So dominant was the magical material of German Pietist origin until the relatively recent exploration of the magical materials in the Cairo Geniza that the most comprehensive survey of Jewish magic to date (published over seventy-five years ago) was based almost exclusively upon it. The survey, still well worth consulting, is Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (New York, 1939). For a sense of the rich contributions of the Geniza to the study of ancient and medieval Jewish magic since the 1980s, see Gideon Bohak, "The Jewish Magical Tradition from Late Antique Palestine to the Cairo Genizah," *From Hellenism to Islam* (2009), 324–42.

directions for making a "Golem" preserved in these sources. In a manner reminiscent of Renaissance-era conceptions of the magus as the apex of human perfection, the German Pietists regarded magical prowess as the ultimate testament to, and manifestation of, human piety.[6]

The magical materials that circulated among early modern Jews were generally thought to be "too holy to print," but there were notable exceptions, including *Raziel ha-Malakh* [The Angel Raziel], published in Amsterdam in 1701. This anthological work of magical materials – much of which may be traced back to the German Pietists – would be repeatedly reprinted, often in editions marketed as apotropaic protection to the buyer, who was instructed on the frontispiece to keep the book at home to prevent fires. One might also find in *Raziel* a handy amulet featuring bird-like angel figures whose particular power was directed against the child-killing demon Lilith.[7]

Rabbinic traditions were indeed remarkably permissive with regard to practicing many forms of magic, despite biblical strictures such as the famous anti-divination litany of Deuteronomy 18:9–12. Rabbis regarded adjurations and amulets as licit, even when demonic powers were invoked for their potential assistance. In the context of treating illness, even the few strictures that remained were summarily dropped. From the rabbinic point of view, biblical laws against magic prohibited only very specific techniques, just as the laws of the Sabbath prohibited only 39 "action verbs." Everything else was permissible. This principle was clearly expressed in the dictum of the Babylonian Talmud, "The laws of magic are akin to the laws of Sabbath"[8] (BT Sanhedrin 67b). The infamous verse translated by the royal demonologist King James as "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus 22:18), so frequently invoked by the early modern Christian demonologists who endorsed the witch-hunts of the period,[9] was never understood in Jewish tradition as a directive to be cruelly enacted but merely as a prohibition against hiring them, hence helping them to make "a living."

[6] K. E. Grözinger, "Between Magic and Religion: Ashkenazi Hasidic Piety," in Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan, eds., *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism* (Berlin, 1995), 28–43; Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany, 1990). Renaissance conceptions of the magus as the most learned – and pious! – of men are discussed in Frank L. Borchardt, "The Magus as Renaissance Man," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 21 (1990), 57–76.

[7] See J. H. Chajes, "'Too Holy to Print': Taboo Anxiety and the Publishing of Practical Hebrew Esoterica," *Jewish History* 26 (2012), 247–62.

[8] See J. H. Chajes, "Rabbis and Their (In)Famous Magic: Classical Foundations, Medieval and Early Modern Reverberations," in Ra'anan S. Boustan, Oren Kosansky, and Marina Rustow, eds., *Tradition, Authority, Diaspora: Critical Terms in Jewish Studies* (Philadelphia, PA, 2011), 58–79.

[9] See Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland* (Exeter, 2000).

The general *longue durée* of Jewish magical materials notwithstanding, it would seem that in the early modern period magical, scientific, medical, and kabbalistic pursuits were often viewed as complementary. Many of the same people who distinguished themselves in one of these fields did so in one or more of the others as well. It might even be said that a characteristic of this period is the difficulty in distinguishing these categories from one another. Today we tend to essentialize them into discrete types, but early modern texts challenge such a priori presumptions with integrative correspondences that frequently trespass upon our neat demarcations.

Undoubtedly the most significant development related to "magic, mysticism, and popular Jewish belief" in this period was the emergence of Lurianic Kabbalah in the latter half of the sixteenth century. R. Isaac Luria (1534–72), often referred to by the acrostic "ha-Ari,"[10] was a phenomenally creative kabbalist, a man of erudition and imagination whose brief period of inspired teaching in Safed in the early 1570s had an impact that can hardly be exaggerated. Luria became a figure of mythological proportions and the subject of an extensive hagiographical literature.[11] His kabbalistic teachings and their subsequent elaborations and adaptations were almost universally adopted as the authoritative Jewish theology–cosmology in subsequent centuries. Luria and his circle of students also modeled practices that were widely adopted, from popular activities such as grave prostration to rather more elite and demanding practices such as prayer with *kavanot* ("intentions" – kabbalistic "subtitles" to be borne in mind during the recitation of the conventional liturgy).[12] Luria was also a diagnostician and healer whose medical and spiritual activities were thoroughly intertwined.[13] The personal orientation of Luria's work is another marker of the early modern origins of this lore. Whether transmitting esoteric practices (known as *yiḥudim* ["unifications"] and *kavanot*) or teachings on reincarnation (a knowledge of which was considered essential to anyone striving to rectify their soul), Luria seems to have often been concerned with the fate of the individual.

[10] The acrostic was understood as denoting "The Ashkenazi [Germanic/European] Rabbi Isaac" as well as "*Ha-Elohi* [the divine] Rabbi Isaac."

[11] See Meir Benayahu, *Toledot ha-Ari* (Jerusalem, 1967); David Tamar, "On the Book *Toledot ha-Ari*," in *Meḥkarim be-Toledot ha-Yehudim be-Erez Yisrael u'be-Italia* [Studies in the History of the Jews in the Land of Israel and in Italy] (Jerusalem, 1986), 166–93.

[12] See Pinchas Giller, "Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee: The Veneration of Sacred Relics in Classical Kabbalah," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1994), 147–69.

[13] See Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, 2003).

Although Luria's teachings seem to have been originally delivered without regard to conceptual order and often as something like prescriptions for particular disciples, subsequent generations of kabbalists – beginning with R. Ḥayyim Vital (1542–1620), his most prominent and prolific student – elaborated and edited the material in an attempt to produce a coherent, universally applicable system. For nearly fifty years after his brief period of study with Luria, who died in a 1572 plague some three years after his arrival in Safed, Vital dedicated himself to writing and rewriting the corpus that would eventually, if ironically, become known as *Kitvei ha-Ari*, or the writings of Luria.[14] As we might expect, the decades of reworking resulted in a corpus that bears the strong imprint of Vital himself.[15] Vital, whose father had come from Calabria to the Land of Israel in the wake of the Ottoman Conquest of 1516, is undoubtedly responsible for intensifying the mechanistic discourse characteristic of Lurianic Kabbalah. Vital's other ongoing interests – alchemy, astronomy, magic, and medicine foremost among them – consistently converge in his literary output, and there is an unmistakable discursive singularity to his entire oeuvre. For Vital, in a manner that exemplifies his age, these pursuits were not only compatible, but complementarily aligned along a continuum. That they were so perceived by subsequent readers is evident in the many manuscripts that bind his astronomical-calendrical *Sefer ha-Tekhunah* [Book of Astronomy] alongside his kabbalistic treatises.

The editing of the Lurianic corpus culminated in the mid seventeenth century with the redactional efforts of an itinerant Polish kabbalist, R. Meir Poppers (1624–62). Poppers had been a student of the brilliant former Portuguese *converso* physician, R. Jacob Zemah (seventeenth century), who in turn had studied with Vital's son R. Samuel Vital (1598–1677). Poppers produced the expressions of Lurianism that would be accepted as canonical throughout the Jewish world, most famously *Etz Ḥayyim*, or "Tree of Life/Ḥayyim" (the title referred both to the salvific character of this lore and to its origins in the writings of Vital exclusively). Poppers's works systematically divided the corpus into cosmogonic and cosmological teachings, the kabbalistic rationales for the commandments, and the various commentaries, and were studied by kabbalists from manuscripts until their first printings (Koretz, 1782) by the well-known intellectual and polymath Isaac Satanow (1733–1805). Satanow's enlightened, scientific orientation not only did not prevent him from advancing the distribution of Lurianism

[14] See Yosef Avivi, *Kabbalat ha-Ari*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 2008).

[15] See Ronit Meroz, "Faithful Transmission versus Innovation: Luria and his Disciples," in Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan, eds., *Gershom Scholem's "Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism" 50 Years After* (Tübingen, 1993), 257–74.

through the medium of print, but may have actually inspired him to do so.[16]

The impact of Lurianism on broader sectors of early modern European society did not, however, have to wait for the eighteenth-century publication of *Etz Ḥayyim*. Another highly influential trajectory brought this lore to the attention of European intellectuals, Jews as well as Christians. Sometime in the early seventeenth century, R. Israel Saruk (or Sarug; fl. 1590–1610) began teaching Lurianic Kabbalah in Italy and subsequently around much of the rest of Europe. Saruk claimed to have been a student of Luria's, though this assertion is contested among scholars.[17] In his time, however, his credentials were accepted by leading rabbis and intellectuals including R. Menaḥem Azaria da Fano (1548–1620), the philosopher and former *converso* Abraham Cohen de Herrera (*c*.1570 – *c*.1635), and R. Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591–1655). Saruk's formulations of Lurianism, which are distinctive for their rather more philosophical character than Vital's teachings, were rapidly assimilated by a number of important scholars and published widely, without the consideration for secrecy and controlled distribution that typified the dissemination of Vital's works. Thus, by the mid seventeenth century, works by Fano and Herrera, as well as encyclopedic works by Delmedigo and R. Naftali Hertz Bacharach (seventeenth century) were published. In these works, and especially in the *Emek ha-Melekh* [Valley of the King] of Bacharach, readers could find thorough and orderly presentations of Lurianic lore in its Sarukian expression.[18] Just as the publication of the Zohar in the sixteenth century prompted the outcry of rabbis scandalized by the loss of controlled and circumscribed distribution of esoterica, these seventeenth-century printings of Lurianism – perceived as even more recondite than the Zohar – were considered by some to be an even greater breach of secrecy.[19] The temporal coincidence of the publication of *Emek ha-Melekh* and the Khmelnytsky massacres in 1648 allowed for the inference that divine wrath had been incurred as a result of this indiscretion. *Emek ha-Melekh* is also fascinating as a witness to the specifically Ashkenazic reception of Lurianic Kabbalah. An examination of the work reveals that the rich esoteric traditions of European Jewry were not simply displaced by the arrival of

[16] See Chajes, "*Entzauberung* and Jewish Modernity."

[17] See Ronit Meroz, "R. Israel Sarug, Student of the Ari – A New Examination of the Problem," *Da'at* 28 (1992), 41–50.

[18] See Yehuda Liebes, "Towards a Study of the Author of *Emek ha-Melekh*: His Personality, Writings, and Kabbalah," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 11 (1993), 101–37.

[19] See Isaiah Tishby, "The Controversy Regarding the Zohar in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in *Ḥikrei Kabbalah u-Shluḥoteha*, vol. I (Jerusalem, 1982), 79–130.

Lurianism; the latter could be understood in terms of the former, and the two became creatively integrated.[20]

The circulation of Lurianic lore in Europe was not lost on the Christian Hebraists and kabbalists of the age. One such intellectual, Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636–89), translated selections from *Emek ha-Melekh* and the philosophically oriented works of Herrera (along with key selections from zoharic literature, Cordoverian Kabbalah and more) and created *Kabbala denudata* (Sulzbach, 1677, and Frankfurt am Main, 1684), a grand anthology of Jewish Kabbalah for his Latin readership. The Lurianic teachings were of special interest to Knorr, and proved to be of significant interest to many of his readers over the generations, including not a few celebrated scientists and philosophers, as well as the so-called western esotericists.[21] Leading lights of the seventeenth century, many of them Knorr's interlocutors, from Isaac Newton to Henry More to Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, were exposed to Lurianism by way of Knorr's precise translations, and found the Lurianic version of pansophism, the quest for universal knowledge, to be compelling and potentially complementary to their own intellectual pursuits.[22] Moreover, the discursive practices characteristic of Lurianism in its various forms often shared much in common with those of contemporary natural philosophy – including medical (anatomical-physiological), mechanical, and astronomical discourses – and contributed to the perception of Lurianism as a rigorous, scientific, and all-inclusive metaphysics. The comprehensive collection of *Ilanot* ("trees") – kabbalistic iconotexts – with which Knorr concluded his first volume exemplifies this orientation, bringing together conventions of representation shared by the latest astronomical treatises with highly elaborated arboreal diagrams, schemata that were the *ne plus ultra* of medieval scientific illustration. These grand Lurianic diagrams had been an innovation of R. Jacob Zemah's (mentioned above); R. Meir Poppers also drafted a diagrammatic scroll for his students in Krakow around 1650. The efforts of Zemah and Poppers were among those assembled by Knorr. *Kabbalah denudata* was known to contemporary rabbis, and four of its sixteen fold-out diagrams – apparently Knorr's

[20] See Eliezer Baumgarten, "Notes on R. Naftali Bachrach's Treatment of Pre-Lurianic Sources," *AJS Review* 37 (2013), 1–23 Hebrew Section.

[21] See Allison P. Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the 17th Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury Van Helmont, 1614–1698* (Leiden, 1999).

[22] See J. H. Chajes, "Kabbalah and the Diagrammatic Phase of the Scientific Revolution," in Richard I. Cohen, Natalie B. Dohrmann, Adam Shear, and Elchanan Reiner, eds., *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of David B. Ruderman* (Cincinnati, 2014), 109–23.

original creations – eventually became standard components of the most widely reproduced Jewish kabbalistic scroll, the "Poppers Ilan."[23]

It should be emphasized that the Kabbalah of *Kabbala denudata* was free of the Christological interpolations that had characterized Christian Kabbalah in the preceding centuries; conversionary elements were similarly greatly attenuated. The result was a work of Latin Kabbalah that was not without influence on Hebrew Kabbalah, exemplifying the blurring of religious identities identified by David B. Ruderman as characteristic of this period.[24] The impact of Lurianism via *Kabbala denudata* on central currents of European intellectual life persisted well into the nineteenth century, as recent studies have shown.[25] (The influence of Kabbalah on Spinoza's thought, something that was often presumed by his contemporaries, is debated among modern intellectual historians.)[26]

If the cosmogonic and cosmological theories of Lurianism were compelling to intellectuals in the early modern period, others were no less captivated by its allure. Jews of even scant learning could and did derive inspiration from the hagiographical literature that began to spread quickly by the late sixteenth century. Stories of Luria and his circle presented a divinized figure whose insights were received from heavenly sources. He was a healer whose diagnostics and modalities of treatment probed beneath the surface to reveal the consequences of sins of commission and of omission, in this lifetime as well as in previous incarnations. The hagiographical and theoretical material were in full accord when it came to another key element that exhibits all the hallmarks of early modern magical thinking: the notion that every word and deed reverberates through all of creation. *A fortiori*, the commandments did so as well, their divine design making them uniquely capable of shaping and transforming reality. Here again a modern individualism emerges as characteristic of Lurianism: the individual is empowered by the realization of his or her impact on the cosmos with every action.[27]

[23] See J. H. Chajes, "Durchlässige Grenzen: Die Visualisierung Gottes zwischen jüdischer und christlicher Kabbala bei Knorr von Rosenroth und van Helmont," *Morgen-Glantz* 27 (2017), 99–147.

[24] See David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010).

[25] See, e.g., Paul Franks, "Rabbinic Idealism and Kabbalistic Realism: Jewish Dimensions of Idealism and Idealist Dimensions of Judaism," in Nicholas Boyle and Liz Disley, eds., *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*, vol. IV (Cambridge, 2013), 219–45, esp. 233–4.

[26] See Richard H. Popkin, "Spinoza, 'Neoplatonist Kabbalist?'" in Lenn E. Goodman, ed., *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* (Albany, 1992), 387–409.

[27] See Moshe Idel, *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* (Los Angeles, 2005); Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*.

The more technical kabbalistic corpus paralleled the hagiography as well in its thorough integration of magical elements, which were of unmistakable prominence. In the literature for "professional" kabbalists, extensive techniques presented under the Lurianic neologism *yiḥudim* often had ancient magical pedigrees.[28] A Lurianic practice already mentioned, grave prostration, was construed as central to the attainment of one's spiritual rectification, often through the incubation of the spirit of the interred into the aspirant's body.[29] Though accompanied by meditations that drew on the vocabulary and concepts of Luria's kabbalistic system, from the outside such a practice is difficult to distinguish from earlier forms of necromantic magic. In a similar vein, the hagiographical literature celebrated Luria's ability to identify victims of spirit possession and to prescribe techniques and ritual exorcisms for their cure. Although Luria seems to have been reluctant to perform exorcisms himself, Vital attests that he received thorough instruction from his master on how to proceed. Although the kabbalistic texts highlight Luria's innovative techniques and teachings on spirit possession in light of his doctrine of the soul and reincarnation, the fact that Luria and Vital collaborated to perform exorcisms was framed in hagiographical texts as a testament to their magical prowess.

The accounts of exorcisms performed by Vital on Luria's behalf were among the most popular in the hagiography of the period. They were emulated in life as well as in art. Accounts of spirit possession cases in the centuries that followed would often closely parallel the Lurianic precedents, suggesting that all involved – the possessed, the exorcists, and the (reading and witnessing) public – were well aware of the "script." In the mid seventeenth century, these accounts would also be leveraged to combat skepticism regarding the eternality of the soul and, by extension, the existence of God. R. Menasseh ben Israel (1604–57), among whose other claims to fame had been that he had served as the tutor of the young Baruch Spinoza, collected every such account he could in his *Nishmat Ḥayyim* [Soul of Life] (Amsterdam, 1651) to combat this emergent threat to religion. Ben Israel's efforts have much in common with those of his contemporary Joseph Glanville, whose *Saducismus triumphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1689)

[28] See R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Mystical and Magical Contemplation: The Kabbalists in Sixteenth-Century Safed," *History of Religions* 1 (1961), 9–36.

[29] See Menachem Kallus, "Pneumatic Mystical Possession and the Eschatology of the Soul in Lurianic Kabbalah," in M. Goldish, ed., *Spirit Possession in Jewish Culture* (Detroit, 2003), 159–85, 385.

similarly attempted to use ghost stories to prove the existence of God by means of the rather easier proof of the existence of the demonic.[30]

Printing the Zohar both reflected and contributed to the emergence of the Kabbalah as a popular phenomenon in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The Kabbalah-infused ethical works composed in this period by Cordovero and others also demonstrate this new mission to bring Kabbalah to the Jewish masses. Such an about-face with regard to the politics of esotericism may be explained as a sign of desperation in a period of eroding rabbinic authority, or as a principled, determined attempt to catalyze messianic redemption; it was probably both, and other things as well. Whatever the motives, however, the popularization of Kabbalah begins in earnest in the era of print, and with the great kabbalists of the sixteenth century, with the exception of the Vitalian Lurianic school. The seventeenth century witnessed an explosion of kabbalistic printing, and the penetration of Kabbalah, now also in the Lurianic variety, into every sphere of Jewish life. Although the dissemination of Lurianic Kabbalah was famously credited by Gershom Scholem with paving the way to the near-universal acceptance of the "mystical messiah" Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76), the reverse trajectory is closer to the truth. The Sabbatean movement of the 1660s popularized Lurianism in an unprecedented manner, and its penitential practices in particular.[31] These penitential practices were widely circulated and adopted amongst Jews who would have had no knowledge of Nathan of Gaza's sophisticated Lurianic interpretations of the bizarre actions of Zevi, up to and including his final apostasy. (Zevi, it has been shown, preferred the study of the Zohar himself.[32])

The epicenters of Sabbatean messianism also witnessed the intensification of forms of religious "enthusiasm," a characteristically seventeenth-century phenomenon, albeit with numerous antecedents.[33] Dominant among the enthusiasts were female prophets to whom revelations were vouchsafed, often en masse. There had been clairvoyant-prophetic "wise women" of prominence before Sabbateanism, but the intensity and concentration of the phenomenon in this context were unprecedented.[34]

[30] See J. H. Chajes, *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism* (Philadelphia, 2003); Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago, 2002).

[31] See Zeev Gries, *Sifrut ha-Hanhagot* [Conduct Literature (*Regimen vitae*)] (Jerusalem, 1989).

[32] See Yehuda Liebes, "Sabbetai Zevi's Religious Faith," in Robert Goldenberg and Arthur Green, eds., *Studies in Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism* (Albany, 1993), 107–14.

[33] See Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

[34] See Ada Rapoport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi, 1666–1816* (Oxford, 2011).

Affective piety, somatic spirituality, clairvoyant abilities, and prophetic powers, accompanied by a lack of formal education: these are among the criteria that made a woman a mystic in the eyes of her early modern contemporaries and in the historiography of Christian mysticism. Although Scholem famously reported the absence of women from the history of Jewish mysticism,[35] it is more accurate to confine that observation to the history of learned kabbalists, rather than to the much broader (albeit problematic) category of mysticism. Were we to judge by the standards of early modern Christian mysticism, we would have to conclude that there were indeed early modern Jewish female mystics.[36]

A unique egodocument preserving personal recollections and dreams of R. Ḥayyim Vital is the most revealing source found to date on the magical and mystical activities of Jewish women in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This work, published under the name *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot* [Book of Visions], reveals Vital's ongoing relationships with a number of women whom he regarded as expert diviners, dream interpreters, and mediums capable of communication with angels, demons, and spirits of the dead.[37] Although he considered himself the great kabbalist of his generation, Vital was often frustrated and plagued by self-doubt. According to his own journal-style entries, at such times he was wont to consult one of the clairvoyant women – often expert in deploying techniques such as lecanomancy as well – whom he knew in Safed, Jerusalem, and Damascus (the three cities in which he spent most of his life). Vital had a particularly intense and ongoing relationship with one such woman, Rachel Aberlin, and his lengthy entries about her evince his profound respect for her mystical prowess. Aberlin was also involved in an episode described in detail by Vital involving the teenage daughter of one of his Damascus contemporaries, Rafael Anav. This daughter, who, despite the extensive descriptions of her activities, is only referred to as "the daughter of . . .," came to Vital's attention when, one Friday night in 1609, she became possessed by the soul of a deceased rabbinic sage. This was quite unusual, as the spirits doing the possessing were typically identified as souls of the evil dead who had been denied entrance into the purging realm of

[35] See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1961).

[36] See J. H. Chajes, "He Said She Said: Hearing the Voices of Pneumatic Early Modern Jewish Women," *Nashim* 10 (2005), 99–125.

[37] For richer detail and analysis of this material, see the discussions in J. H. Chajes, "In a Different Voice: The Non-Kabbalistic Women's Mysticism of Early Modern Jewish Culture" [Hebrew], *Zion* 67 (2002), 139–62; J. H. Chajes, "Women Leading Women (and Attentive Men): Early Modern Jewish Models of Pietistic Female Authority," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *Jewish Religious Leadership: Image and Reality* (New York, 2004), 237–62; Chajes, "He Said She Said."

Gehenna. Vital wrote extensively on the episodes that ensued involving this young woman, who, following the successful exorcism of the sage, quickly developed her capacities as a medium. Vital did not hesitate to use the young woman's services to establish contact with his departed master, Luria, who had died nearly forty years before and was unresponsive to Vital's own efforts to establish posthumous contact. The young woman had no difficulty whatsoever reaching Luria, and passed a number of messages – most of them quite insulting – from the master back to his frustrated student. For her part, Rachel Aberlin is described by Vital as having taken a personal interest in the young woman's welfare. In this, as in other episodes described by Vital, Aberlin seems to emerge as the de facto leader of a circle of clairvoyant Jewish women admired and consulted by the great kabbalist. Vital's admiration does not seem to have been unique in its day, as may be inferred from the inclusion in the earliest collection of golden-age Safed hagiography of two remarkable stories about yet another woman featured in *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot*, Francesa Sarah.[38] These stories about a remarkable female mystic thus stood alongside classic accounts of Luria and the other luminaries of sixteenth-century Safed; their removal from later published versions may have been in reaction to the prominence of visionary women amongst Sabbatean enthusiasts.

In addition to the clearly exceptional Jewish women who were celebrated by contemporaries for their mystical attainments and magical expertise (mainly in the Ottoman world), a more prosaic form of women's religiosity may be observed in eastern Europe with the rise of *tkhines* ("supplications"). These Yiddish prayers for private – primarily female – devotion emerged in sixteenth-century printed sources and flourished in the following centuries. Jewish women, as readers of Yiddish paraphrases or translations of Hebrew guides to proper religious behavior, were among the new consumers (and were even occasionally among the producers) of inexpensive publications intended for *nashim ve-'amei ha-aretz* ("women and the ignorant").[39] Kabbalah was not a central, organizing principle of early modern Ashkenazic women's religiosity. Instead, we find an embodied devotionality, non-technical prayer, and folk practices that cultivated reciprocity with the dead.

Eastern European Hasidism, which emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century, represents the apogee of the popularization of the

[38] The stories about Francesa Sarah are found in the manuscript of Joseph Sambari's late-seventeenth-century work on Ottoman Jewry, *Divrei Yosef*. See Shimon Shtober, ed., *Sefer Divrei Yosef le-R. Yosef Sambari* (Jerusalem, 1994), 322–60.

[39] See Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston, 1998).

Kabbalah in the period under consideration. Magical elements are also pervasive, beginning with the movement's foundational figure, R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (*c.*1700–60), whose very moniker attests to his special expertise in this realm. The Ba'al Shem Tov (or the acrostically shortened Besht) spent his last decades as something of a kabbalist-in-residence in the town of Medzhybizh (today in the Ukraine). There he served the Jewish community (*kahal*), which supported him fully as a religious virtuoso and healer, a "Balszem Doktor" as he was called in the tax records of the Czartoryski family (which owned the town).[40] An expert in herbal medicine, amulet writing, and exorcism, the Besht also developed novel approaches to meditation and prayer.[41] His great charisma and capacity for inspired teaching are also attested by the fact that rabbinic scholars of the highest order saw fit to accept him as their teacher. Among them was R. Dov Ber, the Magid of Mezerich, who is regarded as the organizing founder of the Hasidic movement. The atmosphere of the Magid's Hasidic court was captured magnificently by Solomon Maimon (1753–1800) in his famous autobiography.[42] Maimon's antagonism and judgmental remarks do not obscure his rich eyewitness picture of the environment that spawned most of the great Hasidic dynasties of the nineteenth century. Maimon's account also provides precious insight into the attraction of this movement for Jews of all social strata.

Although Hasidic leaders or "rebbes" varied enormously in their approaches to Hasidism (as a social movement, as an ideology/theology, etc.), many were perceived by their constituencies as clairvoyants capable of performing wonders and miracles. The image of the Ari in earlier hagiography undoubtedly had a formative influence on popular perceptions of charismatic Hasidic rebbes. Indeed, the hagiographical literature of Hasidism begins with the publication of *Shivḥei ha-Besht* [Praises of the Besht] (Kapost, 1814). *Shivḥei ha-Besht* bears the clear imprint of the earlier *Shivḥei ha-Ari* [Praises of the Ari], which had been published in the seventeenth century within larger works, including those of Delmedigo and Bacharach. In addition to their presumed magical prowess, many Hasidic rebbes were also learned kabbalists, masters of the earlier lore who nevertheless often proved capable of articulating their kabbalistic

[40] See Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley, 1996).

[41] See Menachem Kallus, *Pillar of Prayer: Teachings of Contemplative Guidance in Prayer, Sacred Study, and the Spiritual Life from the Baal Shem Tov and His Circle* (Louisville, KY, 2011).

[42] See Solomon Maimon, *Solomon Maimon: An Autobiography* (Paisley, 1888), 151–86; Abraham P. Socher, *The Radical Enlightenment of Solomon Maimon: Judaism, Heresy, and Philosophy*, Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture (Stanford, 2006).

teachings in a manner that has been described as psychological or even "existential."[43] Maimon recounted his earliest exposure to such "torahs" by young enthusiasts of the Magid, and his initial enthusiasm for their touching, profound qualities. His account of his direct experience of the Magid's Sabbath "third meal" similarly stresses the latter's efforts to teach in a manner that would resonate personally with all those present.

The structure of Hasidic communities allowed for various circles to coexist. There was the inner circle of the rebbe and his close disciples, who might share the interest and capacity to learn kabbalistic literature and to pray with the demanding techniques of the Ari. An outer circle might benefit from the rebbe's popular discourses and stories, which drew on kabbalistic teachings and leveraged their intriguing power and mystery in a manner suitable to a wide public. Beyond even this circle were, at least in the cases of the great Hasidic "courts," scores of Jews who, on occasion, would travel to receive their rebbe's blessing and perhaps take home a holy relic from their revered master, even a crumb from his table. Hasidism, in all its diversity, became the dominant expression of Jewish religiosity in the nineteenth century; millions of Jews thus participated in a phenomenon that seamlessly wedded magic, mysticism, and popular belief.[44]

Beyond the populous eastern European Jewish centers, Jews in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire seem to have largely retained age-old traditions of learned magic ("Practical Kabbalah") as well as folk practices. Mainly spared the withering Enlightenment critique to which European Jewish religiosity was subjected, particularly in the nineteenth century, "Oriental" Jews continued to study and practice with little pressure to abandon, let alone transvalue or psychologize, tradition. The "recipe books" of magic from these communities often retain formulas that may be found in Geniza documents that predate them by a millennium. Alongside this conservative character, we find throughout these recipe books ample evidence of the syncretistic and assimilative nature of magical material. In perhaps an ironic implementation of the Maimonidian principle of accepting the truth from whatever source it comes, such magical manuscripts are replete with materials of Arabic origin, borrowed from expert Muslim practitioners. Given the practical, even utilitarian, orientation of such pursuits, such sharing of techniques was considered unproblematic. An appreciation of the distinctive features and very different worlds of North African and eastern European Jewry must not, however, obscure

[43] See Ron Margolin, *Mikdash Adam* (Jerusalem, 2004).

[44] For a reliable and concise recent survey, see David Asaf, "Hasidism: Historical Overview," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hasidism/Historical_Overview (accessed 18 July 2014).

their interconnections. The Baal Shem Tov's admiration for his Moroccan contemporary R. Ḥayyim ibn Attar (1696–1743) was born of the former's acquaintance with the latter's biblical commentary *Or ha-Ḥayyim* [Light of Life], which ibn Attar had published in Venice (1742). Shipments from the Italian printing house quickly reached Medzhybizh, where the Moroccan kabbalist became the object of his Podolian contemporary's veneration.

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CHAPTER 18

SABBATAI ZEVI AND THE SABBATEAN MOVEMENT

MATT GOLDISH

The messianic movement surrounding Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76), a Turkish rabbinical scholar and mystic, peaked in the years 1665–6. It was the most widespread and influential Jewish messianic movement since Christianity. While scholars continue to debate the depth and pervasiveness of Jewish faith in Sabbatai, there is no doubt that his messianic candidacy was received enthusiastically across the extensive Jewish diaspora, and that a very large number of Jews did believe that Sabbatai was probably the long-awaited messiah.

Jews had believed since biblical times that God would redeem them from their degraded condition – as a nation and perhaps as individuals – with the use of a human emissary, called a messiah ("anointed one"). The rabbis of the Talmud and medieval Jewish thinkers such as the authoritative Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) amplified and institutionalized Jewish hopes for the messiah. At the same time, conceptions of this figure took on numerous hues in the minds of the people. Rationalists imagined the messianic future in natural terms, while kabbalists expected a series of miraculous events. All needed to contend with the most successful messianists, the Christians, who constantly proclaimed to the Jews that the messiah had already come in the person of Jesus. Christianity, however, was only one in a long list of messianic movements in Jewish history centered around figures who were taken to be the messiah by groups of Jews.[1]

At face value, Sabbatai himself might not appear to be a particularly likely candidate for a successful messianic pretender. He was born into a Jewish merchant family in the thriving Ottoman port of Izmir (Smyrna). The family was not from the dominant Sephardic (Spanish) cultural

[1] There is an enormous literature on these topics. See, e.g., Harris Lenowitz, *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* (Oxford, 1998); Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism* (Grand Rapids, 2005; original English edn. 1956; original Norwegian edn. 1951); Marc Saperstein, ed., *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History* (New York, 1992).

group, nor were they Ashkenazic (German and Polish) or Italian Jews. Rather, they were native Romaniotes, descended from the Byzantine Greek Jewish community that had lived in the region for many centuries. While Sabbatai's father and brothers were businessmen, Sabbatai gravitated toward the study of the classic Jewish texts – the Torah, the Talmud, and Kabbalah – at the *yeshivot* ("seminaries"). All evidence suggests that he was a very good and successful student, though hardly exceptional.[2]

Gershom Scholem, in his huge and erudite study of the Sabbatean movement (as scholars refer to the ferment over Sabbatai Zevi), explains what was indeed unusual about him, even as a young man. From a tender age, Sabbatai showed symptoms of bipolar syndrome which increased in severity as he matured. In his manic states, Sabbatai often did strange and even forbidden things, which became a hallmark of both the man and his movement. At the same time, the magnetic charisma which Sabbatai exuded during his manic states, combined with his attractive appearance, appealing voice, and wide rabbinic knowledge, endowed him with an almost hypnotic influence on those around him. Sabbatai's messianic pretensions were not caused by this condition but were certainly abetted by it.

If Sabbatai's background and persona – when not in a manic state – might not have seemed especially apt for a messianic career, neither might his era in the Jewish community appear at first particularly prone to a messianic outbreak. There was no identifiable existential crisis in the Jewish world as a whole in this period. Times were relatively good for Jews in most places – which is to say that they were not being persecuted, expelled or murdered on a mass scale. True, the massacres of Jews in the 1648–9 Khmelnytsky uprising in Poland and subsequent invasions of that region by marauding Swedes and Russians ravaged Ashkenazic Jewry. Those events were already in the past, however, and Polish Jewry had reorganized and re-established itself very rapidly. It is also true that the Inquisitions in Spain and Portugal were still jailing and torturing *conversos*, but by this time they had already been active for almost 200 years and so formed a chronic part of Jewish reality long before and long after Sabbatai. In some areas, such as Amsterdam, London, and much of the New World, Jews enjoyed almost unprecedented freedom. After centuries of exclusion and expulsion from most of western Europe, not only had Jews been

[2] This information comes mainly from Gershom Scholem's benchmark study, *Sabbatai Ṣevi, the Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, 1973; original Hebrew edn. 1957), ch. 2. A more succinct overview of the movement is available in Scholem's article "Shabbatai Zevi and the Shabbatean Movement," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1972), vol. VIV, columns 1219–54, reproduced in Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1988), 244–86. These two studies will be the source of the following discussion of Sabbatai's life and the movement until 1676. Other references below are supplemental to Scholem.

readmitted to the majority of their former habitations in that region, but they were now allowed to live in many places which had never permitted Jewish settlement. Larger Jewish populations had found decent new homes in the vast Ottoman Empire, the Americas, and eastern Poland.[3] This situation suggests that crisis and disaster were not necessarily the major causes of messianic outbreaks.

A more active messianic and apocalyptic atmosphere existed at the time in the Christian world. While Christians, Muslims, and Jews had all experienced a large upsurge in messianic expectations and personalities around the turn of the sixteenth century, by the 1660s only parts of European Christendom remained in this heightened state. The year 1666 symbolized to some Christians the Number of the Beast (666), according to apocalyptic Scripture. While the Thirty Years' War, the failure of the English Revolution, and the disasters in Poland had dampened some Christians' acute expectations of the Second Coming, many others remained certain of its imminence. Some, such as the Dutch merchant Petrus Serrarius, participated intensely in the Sabbatean outbreak.[4]

FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO THE PASSING OF SABBATAI AND NATHAN

By the time Sabbatai was in his middle teens, he was already deeply focused on his spiritual life. He had studied with Izmir's most illustrious *Hakhamim* ("rabbis"), Isaac de Alba and Joseph Escapha. Now he moved into an existence of abstinence and long solitary meditations, which probably did not help his bipolar tendencies. He was ordained around the age of 18, by which time he had studied not only the Torah and Talmud, but the mystical classics of Kabbalah: the Zohar, *Sefer ha-Kanah*, and *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*. It appears that he did not take particular interest in the more recent kabbalistic writings of Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Ari), Luria's student, Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital, or the rest of the circle of mystics of sixteenth-century Safed.

In the late 1640s, Sabbatai apparently told a small circle of his peers that he thought he was destined to be the messiah. At least one of these men, Moses Pinheiro, took Sabbatai seriously and remained a dedicated follower throughout his life. During this period, Sabbatai also began to discuss his

[3] See Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, 1550–1750, 3rd edn. (London, 1998), chs. 6–9.

[4] Scholem's theories about the conditions that promoted the rise of the Sabbatean movement will be discussed below. For my own views, see Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), chs. 1–2.

much-vaunted "Mystery of the Godhead" and other kabbalistic secrets which he implied that he could only have known through a unique divine communication. He may have repeated his claims to be the messiah more openly. Another long-standing feature of Sabbatai's personality began to manifest itself at this stage as well: his difficult relations with women and sex. Abundant indications in the testimony of his supporters suggest that he struggled mightily with the temptation to masturbate, a sin especially grave in the eyes of the kabbalists. He contracted, but failed to consummate, two marriages.[5]

Sabbatai's predilection for transgressing Jewish law in his manic states eventually caused his own teachers to evict him from Izmir in the early 1650s. Sabbatai wandered through the Ottoman Empire for several years. One of his longer stops was in Salonika, whence he was expelled after inviting the community to a wedding ceremony in which Sabbatai was the groom and a Torah scroll was the "bride." From there he went to Constantinople (as Jews continued to call Istanbul), where he again committed bizarre acts and transgressions that precipitated his banishment. Among these was an episode wherein he purchased a large fish, dressed it up as a baby, and placed it in a cradle. The rabbis apparently displayed great patience for this scholar, who had clearly gone mad, but eventually the transgressive facets of his mania became too much even for them. Sabbatai's bipolar syndrome and the role of madness in the movement have been the subject of considerable scholarly discussion. Among the topics examined there is the process by which an action or tendency normally considered mad can be transformed into something reflecting genius and even sanctity.[6]

[5] For a deep analysis of the gender issues in Sabbatai and in the Sabbatean movement from a mystical perspective, see Avraham Elqayam, "To Know Messiah: The Dialectics of Sexual Discourse in the Messianic Thought of Nathan of Gaza" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 65 (1996), 637–70; Elliot R. Wolfson, "The Engenderment of Messianic Politics: Symbolic Significance of Sabbatai Şevi's Coronation," in Peter Schäfer and Mark R. Cohen, eds., *Toward the Millennium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco* (Leiden, 1998), 203–58.

For a popular and far more problematic exposition of this topic, see Eli Shai, *Messiah of Incest: New and Uncensored History of the Sexual Element in Jewish Mystical Messianism* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 2002).

[6] Aside from Scholem, who deals extensively with this topic, see Avraham Elqayam, "The Horizon of Reason: The Divine Madness of Sabbatai Şevi," *Kabbalah* 9 (2003), 7–61; Moshe Idel, "Saturn and Sabbatai Tzevi: A New Approach to Sabbateanism," in Schäfer and Cohen, eds., *Toward the Millennium*, 173–202; Zvi Mark, "*Dybbuk* and *Devekut* in the *Shivḥei ha-Besht*: Toward a Phenomenology of Madness in Early Hasidism," in Matt Goldish, ed., *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the*

Sabbatai was eventually able to move back to Izmir. He stayed there, apparently in a melancholy state, until 1662, when he determined to move to Jerusalem. He traveled there by way of Egypt, maintaining the dignified demeanor that characterized his bearing between manic and depressive swings. The important contacts Sabbatai made in Cairo during this trip may be the reason that the rabbinic leaders in Jerusalem sent him back to Egypt for an emergency fundraising mission in 1663. There he became closely associated with the circle of Raphael Joseph Chelebi, the leader of Egyptian Jewry, to whom he seems to have revealed his innermost secret thoughts. During this sojourn, Sabbatai also married once again, this time to Sarah, an Ashkenazic refugee who was orphaned during the Khmelnytsky uprising. Sarah did not have a reputation for chastity, but during her extensive wanderings she told everyone she was destined to marry the messiah. Sarah was Sabbatai's wife during the height of the movement and was the first of a series of important women in Sabbatean history.[7]

The next episode in Sabbatai's life was decisive. It turned him from a troubled scholar into a plausible messianic pretender whose movement would profoundly affect the Jewish future. After a period of relative stability, Sabbatai's mood swings returned. He sought help from a doctor of the soul, a young kabbalist named Nathan Ashkenazi who, at the age of 22, was already widely regarded as a spiritual visionary. Like Sabbatai, Nathan was a kabbalist, but he was a close follower of the traditions and ideas of Rabbi Isaac Luria and his Safed circle. In fact, it appears that Nathan saw himself as a sort of successor to Luria, or perhaps even his reincarnation.[8] Nathan was living in Gaza, and in April 1665 Sabbatai went to see the young sage on his way back to Jerusalem. Sabbatai must have

Present (Detroit, 2003), 270–80. See also Moshe Idel, *Saturn's Jews: On the Witches' Sabbath and Sabbateanism* (New York, 2011).

[7] See Goldish, *Sabbatean Prophets*, 89–97; Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On the Position of Women in Sabbatianism" [Hebrew], in Rachel Elior, ed., *The Sabbatian Movement and its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism*, vol. I, Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, 16 (Jerusalem, 2001), 143–327. An expanded English edition of this study has been published as Rapoport-Albert, *Women in the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi, 1666–1816* (London, 2011). See also Alexander van der Haven, *From Lowly Metaphor to Divine Flesh: Sarah the Ashkenazi, Sabbatai Tsvi's Messianic Queen and the Sabbatian Movement* (Amsterdam, 2012).

[8] On Nathan, see Abraham Elqayam, "The Mystery of Faith in the Writings of Nathan of Gaza" [Hebrew] (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993); Goldish, *Sabbatean Prophets*, ch. 3; Gershom Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism* [Hebrew], ed. Y. Liebes (Tel Aviv, 1991), chs. 1–2; Scholem, *Studies and Texts Concerning the History of Sabbetianism and its Metamorphoses* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1982), pt. II (documents), #2; Chaim Wirszubski, *Between the Lines* [Hebrew], ed. M. Idel (Jerusalem, 1990), pt. III.

expected a *tikkun*, a remedy for his soul. Instead Nathan told Sabbatai that he had seen Sabbatai in a vision, and that he was indeed the messiah!

Nathan took Sabbatai on long journeys around the Land of Israel and told the reluctant rabbi about his soul, his messianic calling, and the future of the world. Sabbatai became convinced that his notions of messiahship had been no fantasy. Shortly afterward, on the night of the Shavu'ot festival, Nathan danced wildly and celebrated with a group of great rabbinic leaders, some local and some visiting from other Ottoman communities, and then suddenly leaped in the air and fell down in a dead faint. Hakham Me'ir Rofe pronounced him dead, but a moment later a strange voice began to issue from his throat. Nathan was possessed by an auditory heavenly spirit (*magid*) speaking through his own mouth and declaring Sabbatai the messiah. This incident, which clearly paralleled a famous event in the Safed circle of a century earlier, had a profound effect on those present. Soon afterward, in May of 1665, Sabbatai made his own public proclamation of his messianic calling. The prominent rabbis who witnessed these events lent their authority to Sabbatai's claims and became the core of believers to spread the faith in the Jewish world. Sabbatai gathered some of these figures and pronounced them princes of the twelve tribes of Israel.[9]

From this point the movement took off with amazing speed.[10] Nathan began to produce tracts and epistles that would eventually become the basic literature of the early movement, including a letter to Raphael Joseph Chelebi in Egypt. This widely distributed document laid out the immediate future of the messianic unfolding. It proved to be false in almost every prediction, but by the time this was discernable it did little damage to the movement, which was running under its own steam. A major feature of Nathan's writings – the pivotal feature in the view of Scholem and his heirs – was the central role of Lurianic Kabbalah. Nathan used concepts and language of exile, redemption, the soul, evil, and the messiah taken from Luria's teachings in order to explain Sabbatai's mission. When Sabbatai

[9] See Matt Goldish, "Vision and Possession: Nathan of Gaza's Earliest Prophecies in Historical Context," in Goldish, ed., *Spirit Possession*, 217–36; Goldish, *Sabbatean Prophets*, 63–71.

[10] I have found Malcolm Gladwell's "tipping point" thesis, including many specifics of his analysis, to be directly applicable to the spread of Sabbateanism. Using Gladwell, one need not necessarily explain why the movement appealed to communities around the Jewish world all at the same time, as Scholem demands (see below). It is enough to understand the first spark that set fire to the movement and the general conditions that created fertile ground for its spread. See Goldish, *Sabbatean Prophets*, 7 and n. 22 there; Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston, 2000).

entered his manic state and began transgressing Jewish law, for example, Nathan explained that these acts were a *tikkun*, a mystical cosmic repair for which Sabbatai needed to enter the realm of the evil husks (*kelippot*) – concepts taken directly from Lurianic thought. Nathan stated that all must believe in his prophecy and Sabbatai's messiahship without demanding miracles or proofs. As it turned out, however, the miracles and proofs supplied themselves in the imaginations of the Jews.

Nathan's writings were not, however, the immediate cause of the movement's spread. Indeed, few Jews even saw them until the faith had already proliferated. These tracts acted more as a theological support and justification for facts already on the ground. It was rather the charismatic spiritual authority of Sabbatai and Nathan, along with the prestige of the important rabbis who witnessed the events in Gaza on Shavu'ot, that fomented its wild immediate success. Long before people had access to Nathan's theological writings, the very fact that he and a group of other highly distinguished rabbis in the Holy Land were enthusiastic believers set the mass movement in motion. In Malcolm Gladwell's terms, they were *connectors* and *mavens*.[11] Wherever these eminent early emissaries of the faith traveled or their fervent letters were received, expectations of Sabbatai's messianic manifestation immediately blossomed.[12]

On the heels of Nathan's revelations about Sabbatai, prophets or prophesiers began to appear in many Jewish communities. Most were undistinguished, but the spectacle of ordinary people falling into revelatory ecstasies, often performing bizarre physical feats, and proclaiming Sabbatai the messiah, persuaded not a few Jews that something miraculous was afoot. Much of this colorful euphoria followed in a wide swath along the itinerary of Sabbatai and his rabbinic emissaries as they traveled through the Ottoman Empire. An enormous repentance movement swept the Jewish world as well, often in response to the prophetic outbreaks.[13]

Sabbatai himself went from Gaza to Jerusalem, where the leading rabbis rejected his claims and denounced him to the Muslim judge, the Qadi. It is not clear what happened when Sabbatai went personally to speak with the Qadi, but the very fact that he was not jailed or killed on the spot was taken as a miracle by some Jews, and rumors about the miracles that had occurred

[11] Gladwell, *Tipping Point*, ch. 2.

[12] See Jacob Barnai, "The Spread of the Sabbatean Movement in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in Sophia Menache, ed., *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora: The Pre-Modern World* (Leiden, 1996), 313–38 (appears as ch. 2 of Barnai, *Sabbateanism – Social Perspectives* [Hebrew] [Jerusalem, 2000]).

[13] See Goldish, *Sabbatean Prophets*, ch. 4.

in the Qadi's chambers soon spread. Sabbatai thus gained important followers in Jerusalem as well. This was one of innumerable miraculous events reported in connection to Sabbatai and his circle. One of the many oddities of Sabbatean history is that the Jerusalem rabbinate banished him from the city, but they did not take active steps to suppress the movement or respond decisively to communications from their colleagues in the diaspora.

Sabbatai left Jerusalem as the object of a rabbinic ban, but his arrival in Aleppo in July of 1665 was a triumph. He only spoke about his messianic mission with individual rabbis there, and he moved on to his native Izmir in September of that year, but the excitement surrounding him quickly burst forth in the most sensational manner. Outbreaks of prophesying, visions of the prophet Elijah, reports of miracles, and massive penitential movements erupted in both cities. Thus, though the rabbis of Izmir knew that Sabbatai had been banned by the Jerusalem leaders, the movement had already developed beyond rabbinic control. There was, as it turned out, a split in the position of the Izmir rabbis, in which Sabbatai's supporters easily had the upper hand, with the backing of Sabbatai and of the populace.[14] In the winter of 1665, Sabbatai's manic persona again asserted itself. He began to commit ritual transgressions and perform other "strange actions," some quite destructive. These were now perceived as holy functions by the enthusiastic believers, who drowned out the objections of the anti-Sabbatean party. Sabbatai extended his practice of distributing honors to his chief followers, now bestowing kingships on several of them.

Letters written by both Jews and Christians in Aleppo and Izmir had been reaching Europe for months. The earliest ones were reports of the reappearance of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel from their long exile beyond the mythical Sambatyon River. A clearer picture emerged as Sabbatai's name and alleged miracles were transmitted, enhanced by copyists, and passed along to others. Nathan's missives were likewise distributed and studied.[15] Many Jews around the Mediterranean and Europe began to sell off their property and neglect their businesses in expectation of the impending end of days.

[14] See Jacob Barnai, "Messianism and Leadership: The Sabbatean Movement and the Leadership of the Jewish Communities in the Ottoman Empire," in A. Rodrigue, ed., *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry* (Bloomington, 1992), 167–82 (appears in Hebrew as ch. 4 of Barnai, *Sabbateanism – Social Perspectives*).

[15] See Brandon Marriott, *Transnational Networks and Cross-Religious Exchange in the Seventeenth-Century Mediterranean and Atlantic Worlds: Sabbatai Sevi and the Lost Tribes of Israel* (Farnham, UK, 2015).

Other letters warning of Sabbatai's dangers to communal stability, however, were also transmitted from Izmir to the larger communities. Thus, when Sabbatai sailed for Istanbul in the very last days of 1665, the authorities had been alerted by some Jewish leaders and prepared to arrest the wayward Jew. Storms delayed his arrival, but he was duly arrested in February of 1666 before he was able to land in the capital. Again, the restraint of the government in not killing him on the spot was perceived by the believers as a miracle and they became even more fervent. The Grand Vizier, Ahmed Koprülü, sentenced Sabbatai to prison for rebellion and causing agitation in the Jewish community. In April of 1666, when Sabbatai's cell in Constantinople had turned into a pilgrimage center for throngs of expectant Jews from all over, he was moved to a prison in Gallipoli. This, however, did little to alleviate the situation. It was a small matter to pay off the guards and turn the Gallipoli fortress into a reception center for Sabbatai's admirers. In both his dignified, learned moderate state and his intense, wild, charismatic, manic state, Sabbatai impressed the distinguished guests from around the Jewish world who came to pay homage or report home concerning his authenticity.

Jewish communities across Europe, the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, Yemen, and even America kept abreast of Sabbatai's progress and eagerly awaited his manifestation as the king messiah. Many Christian millenarians saw in him the precursor of Jesus' Second Coming, and so became enthusiastic supporters. (I do not believe, however, that many of them saw Sabbatai as the actual messiah.) Rabbis sent letters of homage. Business came to a standstill. Sabbatai's most vocal opponent, Rabbi Jacob Sasportas, wrote or spoke to everyone he could, making an eloquent case against the would-be messiah and his prophet – a case that in earlier ages would probably have caused serious reflection.[16] But it was to no avail; the excitement and success of the movement bred on themselves and washed away doubt. The authority of the rabbis was ebbing, and the ancient Jewish hope for redemption gained a powerful new hold on the imagination of the people. This failure of opposition is one of the most striking features of the Sabbatean movement. It suggests a pre-existing weakening in the authority of Jewish political and intellectual institutions as a factor in the entire affair.[17]

[16] On Sasportas and the opponents, see Goldish, *Sabbatean Prophets*, ch. 5; *Sefer Şişat Novel Şevi*, ed. Isaiah Tishby [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1954). Popular and religious treatments can be found in Elie Moyal, *Rabbi Yaakob Sasportas* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1992); Isaac Sasportas, *Moshi'an Shel Yisra'el: Ha-Ro'eh me-Hamburg* [Hebrew] (Tifrah, 2005).

[17] On the weakening of rabbinic authority in this period, see David B. Ruderman, "Crisis of Rabbinic Authority," in *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010).

At the height of the messianic excitement, Sabbatai sat in his "fortress of strength" in the Gallipoli prison and received important guests from around the Jewish world every day. One day in early September of 1666, a rabbi from Poland named Nehemiah Kohen came to see him. Apparently the two had important matters to discuss, because they spent several days secluded together in talks. The sources differ about whether Kohen rejected Sabbatai's messianic claims or whether he made competing claims about himself as messiah. In any case, Kohen walked out, declared to the guards that he wanted to embrace Islam, was taken to Edirne (Adrianople), and there denounced Sabbatai before the royal authorities.[18] This was certainly not the first they had heard of Sabbatai's pretensions, but it was the proximate cause of their decision to act. Sabbatai was taken before the diwan and the sultan and grilled about the allegations. He denied making messianic claims and instead presented himself as a victim of others' schemes. A physician at court, an apostate Jew, suggested that Sabbatai could save himself by converting to Islam. Now, the expected messianic response to such a proposition would be immediate and vociferous rejection; but that is not what happened. Sabbatai accepted the recommendation, donned the turban, and converted to Islam. He was given the name Aziz Mehmet Effendi, assigned a titular honor as "keeper of the palace gates" (Kapiči Başi), and furnished with a stipend. Sultan Mehmed IV expected that Sabbatai would convince many other Jews to convert, which was partially correct. Recent research also shows that Sabbatai's mild treatment as a non-violent religious personality was typical of Mehmet's policy with similar figures.[19]

One would think that the apostasy of a Jewish messiah would quickly bring his movement to an end. This was largely true, but there were factors that caused a significant number of Jews to hold on to their faith in Sabbatai for months and even years after his conversion. One issue was the slow and unreliable nature of communications at the time. A large number of communities did not hear about the events in Istanbul for many months, and when information did arrive, many assumed it was falsified. This connects to a second issue: it was extremely difficult for people who had invested their faith, worldly goods, and human dignity in Sabbatai simply to drop the whole matter instantly. The Jewish nation had been

[18] According to most reports, Kohen immediately fled back to Poland where he returned to the life of a pious Jew. See Scholem, *Ṣabbatai Ṣevi*, 658–68.

[19] On this incident and its Ottoman context, see Marc David Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford, 2008), ch. 6; Baer, "Introduction" to *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks* (Stanford, 2010); Cengiz Sisman, *The Burden of Silence: Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes* (Oxford, 2015).

riding a spiritual wave of immense power. Many simply could not accept that it had all been a delusion – or, worse, chicanery – on the part of their erstwhile redeemers. A third issue, connected to the second, was the difficulty certain rabbis had in relinquishing the spiritual gains they perceived in the wave of repentance accompanying the messianic excitement.

Over the next several years, the situation remained in flux. Some communal leaders attempted to wipe out any remembrance of this embarrassing episode. In some instances, pages were torn from congregational records, and many letters and documents were destroyed. Later, bans were declared on anyone who persisted in his or her Sabbatean faith. Many congregants and rabbis, however, adopted a wait-and-see attitude, desperately hoping that the apostasy rather than the faith would turn out to be the deception. A hard core maintained and even strengthened its commitment, a phenomenon well documented in the history of prophetic movements.[20] An incongruous disparity developed whereby some communities had fairly open Sabbatean cells, while other communities, sometimes very close by, banished and actively persecuted believers.

A related feature of Sabbateanism in this period is the fact that numerous rabbinic leaders maintained their faith with relative openness, despite the very strong backlash against the movement and its adherents among most of the Jewish establishment. Certainly Nathan of Gaza was able to find hosts and support almost every place he traveled. Scholem posits that the anti-Sabbatean leaders had solid control of the larger communities, where they successfully repressed the movement, but smaller communities often had active cells of believers. He offers the examples of Corfu and Kastoria.[21] From Scholem's own work, we may add a number of communities and rabbis to this list.

Salonika, which does not at all fit Scholem's model of small communities, was home to a particularly sizable group of believers, largely because of Nathan's activity there. Rabbis Solomon Florentin, Joseph Philosoph (Sabbatai's sometime father-in-law), and Isaac Hanan were among the illustrious leaders in Salonika who maintained and advocated the faith long after Sabbatai's apostasy and death. The former two, in fact, were among those who led the mass conversion of believers to Islam in the 1680s, founding the secret Sabbatean sect of the Dönme.[22] In Edirne (Adrianople), Sabbatai preached Islam in the synagogues and his own messianism behind closed

[20] See Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails* (St. Paul, 1956); Jon R. Stone, ed., *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy* (London, 2000).

[21] See Scholem, *Şabbatai Şevi*, 736. On Nathan's acceptance, see 711–12, 776–8.

[22] See ibid., 777–9.

doors. Nathan was active there as well. Hakham Me'ir Rofe of Hebron, one of the original witnesses to Nathan's aforementioned Shavu'ot prophecy, as well as Rabbi Solomon Kohen of Budapest and Hakham David Yitzhaki – both important rabbinic scholars – led the believers in Edirne.[23]

In Ancona, no less a personage than the revered chief rabbi, Mehalalel Hallelyah (Halleluyah) led the party of believers for years after 1666. When Nathan and his companion, the Sabbatean scholar Hakham Samuel Gandoor, showed up in his synagogue in 1668, Hakham Hallelyah welcomed them and embraced them with every show of honor.[24] After his death, the rabbinate passed to another ardent Sabbatean, Hakham Elijah Muchachon (Mojajon; Mochachion). Muchachon was a native of either Greece or Ancona, born around 1663. He studied in Salonika under Hakham Solomon Florentin but was also a member of the circle of Nathan of Gaza. By 1696, he was serving as rabbi in Ancona.[25] It would undoubtedly be possible to add many further examples to this list.

The believers were abetted by the outpouring of writings by Sabbatean theologians, many of which were quite heretical. The two main figures were Nathan Ashkenazi of Gaza and the former-*converso* Abraham Miguel Cardoso. Nathan's approach was to see the apostasy as the culmination of Sabbatai's "strange actions," and the one that would ultimately bring redemption to the Jews. He explained, in the terminology of Rabbi Isaac Luria, that there were sparks of holiness buried deep in the evil husks of our world. The most intractable of these could only be raised up from their profane abyss by the messiah himself, who needed to go down to the depths of impurity – that is, to apostatize – in order to reach them. He would be repudiated for a period, as the biblical prophets predict of the messiah, then return triumphant after many tribulations and save the Jews.

Cardoso's approach had many similarities to that of his competitor, Nathan, but revealed far more of Cardoso's Christian roots. He said that, like Queen Esther, the messiah must appear to apostatize in order to be rebuked and reviled by his fellow Jews as the prophets state. In short, says Cardoso, the messiah must himself become a *converso*! This approach was clearly aimed at the large contingent of former-*conversos* who had strongly supported Sabbatai.[26] Rabbi Matthias Bloch Ashkenazi, an open believer

[23] See ibid., 839–54; Scholem, *Researches*, 194–202.

[24] On him, see Scholem, *Ṣabbatai Ṣevi*, 776; Scholem, *Researches*, 54–72.

[25] On him, see Meir Benayahu, *Sefonot* 14: 136–46; Scholem, *Researches*, 564–7.

[26] On Nathan, see note 8 above. On Cardoso, see *Abraham Miguel Cardoso: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. David Halperin (New York, 2001); David J. Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi: Testimonies to a Fallen Messiah* (London, 2007); Isaac R. Molho and Abraham Amarilio, "Autobiographical Letters of Abraham Cardozo" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 3–4 (1960), 182–241; Scholem, *Researches*, ch. 5; Scholem, *Studies and Texts*, pt. II (texts),

and Sabbatean prophet, served as the rabbi of important communities in Egypt into the late 1660s. He then proceeded to Mosul, where his adherence to the faith was a help rather than a hindrance to his success. He brought writings of Nathan with him and may have inspired the new wave of messianism in Kurdistan and Persia at this time. Bloch probably had support from the several important rabbis of Aleppo who continued in their belief.[27] Morocco was quite divided, but Hakham Jacob Sasportas, the movement's great opponent, claimed with only some exaggeration that he doubted there was a rabbi in Morocco or Algeria who was not a believer.[28]

Nathan traveled from place to place, here welcomed and there abused, often promising new dates for the redemption only to see them pass without incident. His kabbalistic theology became increasingly creative and complex as he struggled to hold the movement together. And what of Sabbatai himself? He appears, as usual, to have oscillated – sometimes acting as a Jew, sometimes as a Muslim; sometimes embracing his messianic role, sometimes abjuring; sometimes maniacal and transgressive, sometimes depressed and quiescent.[29] Eventually the persistent rumors of Sabbatai's failure to act as a proper Muslim, along with disturbing reports of his "strange deeds" and some sexual aberrations, led to his third arrest in August 1672. The vizier again behaved with surprising lenience and had Sabbatai deported to Dulcigo (Ulkün), Albania, in January 1673, rather than putting him to death. Sabbatai lived out his last three years in obscurity, with occasional visits from supporters. When Sarah died in 1674, he married Esther (elsewhere called Yoheved) Philosoph, the daughter of an important Salonika rabbi and supporter of Sabbatai. This connection would have major implications for the future of the movement after his death. Sabbatai died suddenly in 1676 at the age of 50. Nathan, true to form, continued to propagandize for the faith, explaining that

#3, 4, 5; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso, a Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York, 1971; repr., Seattle, 1981), ch. 7; Nissim Yosha, "The Philosophical Background of Sabbatian Theology – Guidelines Toward an Understanding of Abraham Michael Cardoso's Theory of the Divine" [Hebrew], in *Exile and Diaspora: Studies in the History of the Jewish People Presented to Professor Haim Beinart on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1988), 541–72 (excerpted from Yosha's Hebrew University master's thesis on Cardoso).

[27] Scholem, *Ṣabbatai Ṣevi*, 751–3. [28] Sasportas, *Ṣiṣat Novel Ṣevi*, 318–20.

[29] On Sabbatai's attitude toward his own situation in the last decade of his life, see Avraham Elqayam, "'Bury my Faith' – A Letter from Sabbetai Zevi in Exile" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 55 (1993), 4–37; Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi*, Third Testimony ("The Najara Chronicle") and Appendix 2 ("Sabbatai Zevi's Circular Letter"); Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism* (Albany, 1993), chs. 3–4.

Sabbatai had simply been hidden by God in preparation for the final act of his mission (apotheosis). Nathan himself died in Macedonia in January of 1680.

And so it was that a man who began his career as a commandment-breaking Jewish messiah became a commandment-breaking Muslim Jewish messiah, and finally a dead commandment-breaking Muslim Jewish messiah while still maintaining a considerable following of scholars as well as lay Jews. It seems appropriate now to examine some theories about what made this movement so successful.

INTERLUDE: MAJOR POSITIONS ON THE SUCCESS OF SABBATEANISM

The Sabbatai Zevi explosion has been noted and explained by historians since the time of the events themselves. Certain theories of its success have tended to recur in the literature, for instance: that the Jews of the time were ignorant and were led astray by the confusing kabbalistic explanations of Nathan and Sabbatai; that the Thirty Years' War, Khmelnytsky massacres, and subsequent attacks on Poland had left the Jews disheartened and desperate; or that Christian millenarians, expecting their own savior to come around the same time, influenced the Jews.[30]

With Gershom Scholem, everything about Sabbatean research changed. His work was so thorough, so far beyond what anyone had done previously, that his voice became authoritative in all matters pertaining to the movement. Scholem asked how local factors such as atrocities in the Ukraine or the influence of a few European millenarians could explain a mass phenomenon that swept the entire Jewish world. There must, he said, be one overarching factor that convinced Jews everywhere to look to Sabbatai as the likely messiah. Scholem's explanation is one of the most famous theses in all of Jewish historiography. He said that the use of Lurianic Kabbalah by Nathan and Sabbatai struck a chord in Jews everywhere and provided the impetus to make the movement take off. Scholem proposed a picture wherein the shock of the Expulsion from Spain in 1492 caused a wave of messianism that lasted until the early 1530s. The messianic impulse did not die with the failure of these movements, but rather reasserted itself in the 1560s and 1570s through Rabbi Isaac Luria's doctrines concerning exile and redemption of the divine presence in the world. During the ensuing century, Lurianic Kabbalah spread and resonated throughout the Jewish world. Thus, when Sabbatai and Nathan explained

[30] Such explanations can be found in the older Jewish historiography by Heinrich Graetz, Solomon Grayzel, Max Margolis and Alexander Marx, Julius Greenstone, and others.

their vision of Sabbatai's mission in the myths and terms of Lurianic Kabbalah, their message penetrated the hearts of Jews everywhere.[31]

While this thesis was criticized by various authors, it was not systematically reassessed for decades. I would suggest two reasons for this. First, another thesis by Scholem concerning Sabbateanism became a sort of lightning rod for negative attention, diverting critics from the thesis about the Expulsion and Luria. That more controversial thesis was Scholem's assertion that Sabbatai's many ritual transgressions ("strange actions"), which became an imperative among his followers, signaled the beginnings of Jewish secularism and modernity. He attempted to show that Sabbateanism metamorphosed into Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) and early Reform Judaism. This idea occasioned a storm of disagreement.[32] A second reason for the delay was that Scholem's mastery of the material was so commanding and daunting, and his personality so intimidating while he was alive, that few people dared criticize him.

Scholem had a deep sense of history, but he was fascinated by Kabbalah and ideology, and his essentially mono-causal explanation of Sabbatai's success is indeed highly problematic. He sometimes appears to stretch the evidence in order to explain Sabbatai's success strictly as a function of factors taking place within the Jewish world, and especially the Kabbalah. Here he was perhaps trying too hard to counteract those historians, such as Heinrich Graetz, who wished to see forces external to the Jewish community as the central engine behind all Jewish mystical movements. The result was a picture in which Scholem imagined that Kabbalah, perceived at this point as an internal Jewish phenomenon, could explain the entire Sabbatean episode. To be fair to Scholem, however, we must concede that he knew plenty about the other factors involved, and he occasionally refers to them.

Perhaps more important is a fact about Scholem's thought that seems to have gone largely unnoticed. In his article on the Sabbatean movement for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (see note 2 above), Scholem offers a much more variegated and believable presentation of causes. "Five factors," he avers, "contributed to the overwhelming success of the messianic awakening." They are: (1) the fact that the messianic call came from the Land of Israel,

[31] For this explanation, see Scholem, *Ṣabbatai Ṣevi*, ch. 1; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1941), Seventh and Eighth Lectures; Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971).

[32] For this thesis, see Scholem, "Redemption Through Sin," in Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 78–141. For examples of the responses, see Jacob Katz, "The Suggested Relationship Between Sabbatianism, Haskalah and Reform," in Katz, *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem, 1998), 504–30; Shmuel Werses, *Haskalah and Sabbatianism: The Story of a Controversy* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1998).

which gave it authority; (2) the renewal of prophecy, led by Nathan of Gaza; (3) the impact of traditional Jewish apocalyptic beliefs, which were appropriated by the Sabbateans; (4) the repentance movement that accompanied Sabbatai's appearance, squelching many critics; and (5) the fact that participants came from all social and educational levels.[33] While these five factors do not correlate precisely with what more recent scholars have proposed, they are worlds closer to a standard historical explanation than his position in the book *Ṣabbatai Ṣevi*. It appears to me that both Scholem and the historians who have subsequently worked on Sabbateanism have perceived a dialectic at work between internal Jewish influences and larger environmental circumstances. They have thus arrived at positions that take into account a wide variety of factors deriving from within the Jewish community and from external religious and political factors, as well as from Kabbalah.

While scores of articles and a number of new books about the Sabbatean movement have added to our knowledge in the past several years,[34] I will focus on three larger analyses: those of Moshe Idel, Jacob Barnai, and myself.

Moshe Idel is probably foremost among the recent critics of Scholem's grand theory concerning the success of Sabbateanism. His central point is that the Kabbalah had not spread nearly as deeply or as widely as Scholem claims, so that it does not constitute a reasonable explanation for the success of the movement. Lurianic Kabbalah is also not nearly as focused on exile and redemption as Scholem suggests. Another major point Idel makes is that Sabbatai was not a student of Lurianic Kabbalah at all, but of the older works, the Zohar, Kanah, and Peli'ah.[35] In general, Idel feels that the obscure theologies of kabbalists in their tiny, cloistered circles are not capable of explaining a mass messianic movement. While he does not offer a unitary alternative explanation, Idel does point out – following the work of Avraham Elqayam – the importance of Sabbatai's association with the planet Saturn (Sabbatai in Hebrew), connected with the kabbalistic

[33] Scholem, "Shabbatai Zevi and the Shabbatean Movement," in Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 259 (=*EJ* 14, 1232).

[34] Among these are *Kabbalah*, vols. 8 and 9; *Sefunot*, vols. 3–4 and 14; *The Sabbatean Movement*, vols. 1–2; Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi*; Halperin, *Abraham Miguel Cardozo*; Elqayam, *Mystery of Faith*; Scholem, *Studies and Texts*; Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*; Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1995); Thomas Coenen, *Ydele verwachtinge der Joden getoont in den Persoon van Sabethai Zevi*, trans. Artur Lagawier and Efraim Shmueli (Jerusalem, 1998); Bezalel Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism* (Spring Valley, NY, 1999).

[35] This point had been made in a review of Scholem's original Hebrew edition of *Ṣabbatai Ṣevi* by Azriel Schochat in *Kirjat Sepher* 33, 4 (1958), 418.

sephirah ("divine emanations") of *Binah* and with melancholia. The association between melancholy (exemplified by Sabbatai's bipolar behavior), the planet Saturn ("Sabbatai" in Hebrew), the Sabbath (Shabbat), genius, and the messiah fit into widespread astrological notions that were familiar to most educated people. While this grouping of ideas tells us little about the spread of Sabbatean belief, it may have been a powerful factor in the rationalization of that belief. This association may also help explain how Sabbatai's madness could be re-imagined as spiritual genius.[36]

Jacob Barnai points out that the main research in this field for the past two generations has been done by specialists in Jewish mysticism (read: Scholem and his school) rather than by historians, and expresses his desire to reassert the historical perspective.[37] While Barnai does not wish to negate Scholem's viewpoint altogether, and he is interested in the more traditional historical explanations, he attempts to explore a fuller range of likely causes for the success of the Sabbatean movement.

Barnai begins with a list of twenty-one factors adduced by various authors: the spread of Kabbalah (particularly the Lurianic strain), the decline of Torah scholarship, wars in Europe and the Ottoman Empire, political shifts around the globe, Christian millenarian expectations, Muslim mysticism and messianism, the movements of mass prophecy, oppression by Christians, Jewish messianic expectations, the Khmelnytsky uprisings of 1648–9, improvements in communications, the impact of *conversos*, economic crises, the Land of Israel as an active center of Jewish life, the messianic proclivities of Sephardic and eastern Jewries, the advent of print, the personality of Sabbatai Zevi, ideological shifts in Europe such as the Renaissance and Reformation, the influence of Sabbatai's wife, astrological thinking, and social tensions within Jewish society. Barnai points out, however, that the earlier historiography repeatedly focused on three of these factors: Kabbalah, Christian messianism, and the Khmelnytsky uprisings.[38] Barnai himself goes on to present a case for the impact of astrology, the effects of Islam on Sabbateanism, the *converso* role, Christian millenarianism, events in eastern Europe, and the tensions within the Izmir Jewish community.[39]

Although Barnai might help us more if he identified which of his listed factors were of major significance and which of less significance, his main

[36] See Idel, "'One from a Town, Two from a Clan': The Diffusion of Lurianic Kabbala and Sabbateanism – A Reexamination," *Jewish History* 7, 2 (1993) 79–104; Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven, 1998), ch. 6; Idel, "On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism," *Kabbalah* 8 (2003), 7–50; Idel, *Saturn's Jews: On the Witches' Sabbat and Sabbateanism* (New York, 2011); Avraham Elqayam, "The Rebirth of the Messiah" [Hebrew], *Kabbalah* 1 (1996), 104–11.

[37] Barnai, *Sabbateanism – Social Perspectives*, Introduction and beginning of ch. 1.

[38] Ibid., 18–19.

[39] Ibid., ch. 1.

contributions to the causation discussion are his emphasis on a multi-causal model and his return to the importance of social, political, and communal factors. In this he joins the sociologist Stephen Sharot, who had earlier emphasized many of the points on Barnai's list of causes.[40] Barnai's views are widely known among circles of Israeli academics and American specialists. The fact, however, that they appear in book form only in Hebrew (parts were published in English in widely scattered publications) has meant that they have not had a wider circulation among non-specialists outside Israel. What English readers often find on the subject of Sabbatai Zevi are either Scholem's dense thousand-page tome, or a broadly marketed popular work by John Freely, a physicist and tour guide, who derives most of his substantive material directly from Scholem.[41]

My own study of the Sabbatean movement led me to propose a model with no new elements, but some different emphases. I suggest that a highly volatile messianic atmosphere existed in the Jewish, Christian, and (to some degree) Muslim worlds in the middle of the seventeenth century. These communities were in close contact and influenced each other as well. Thus, for example, the messianic writings of Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam communicate an acute messianic expectation based on recent world events interpreted through a Jewish lens. He in turn became a popular figure among Christian millenarians with similar hopes. Muslim expectations of the Mahdi – a redeeming figure somewhat similar to the Jewish or Christian messiah – had been stoked in the sixteenth century and were revived periodically by political as well as religious events in the seventeenth century. The Jews were also influenced deeply by the kabbalistic circles in Safed, not so much through their mystical teachings as by the rich hagiography surrounding Isaac Luria, Ḥayyim Vital, Joseph Karo, and others. These figures were reported to have prophetic powers which were related to the dense aura of messianic expectation enshrouding the entire legend of Safed. *Conversos* brought to the Jewish community their own deep-seated messianic proclivities deriving from their liminal experience and unique hopes of redemption. Meanwhile, the corrosion of traditional rabbinic authority and the rise of non-traditional mystical influence at that time hindered the community's usual defenses against the spiritual charisma of figures like Nathan and Sabbatai.

The advent of Sabbateanism thus touched off a powder keg of expectation. Much of that explosion was connected with the perceived return of prophecy as it had existed not only in biblical times, but also in Safed a

[40] Stephen Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic: A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements* (Chapel Hill, 1982), chs. 7–8.

[41] John Freely, *The Lost Messiah: The Astonishing Story of Sabbatai Sevi, Whose Messianic Movement Emerged from the Mysticism of the Kabbalah* (London, 2001).

century before. The nation's willingness to believe in the Sabbatean prophets was driven on the one hand by the great reputation of the rabbis who bore witness to its earliest manifestations, and on the other by the actual spectacle of popular prophetic outbreaks in various Jewish communities. The first great instance, on which many others were modeled, was Nathan of Gaza's public possession by an auditory *magid* spirit on the night of Shavu'ot in 1665. This event itself was clearly modeled on a very famous episode in the life of the great Safed legalist and mystic, Rabbi Joseph Karo, over a century earlier.

As rabbinic emissaries spread the news of this seemingly miraculous occurrence, in which Nathan announced the messianic identity of Sabbatai Zevi, a wave of mimetic emulations followed among scholars and ignoramuses, women and men, children and adults, and even some non-Jews. These mass prophetic phenomena, often accompanied by bizarre and even seemingly impossible feats of mind and body, bore a striking resemblance to similar outbreaks in the Christian world (Quakers, Camisards, St. Médard convulsionaries) and to the ecstasies of Muslim dervishes. Once Jews were convinced by both kabbalistic rabbis and remarkable mass possessions that prophecy had indeed returned, it was natural that they would be open to the message of that prophecy: that Sabbatai was the messiah. From this point the dynamics of mass social movements came into play (the "tipping point"), sweeping the Jewish world.[42]

Scholars have argued in more limited debates about other points concerning the spread of the movement. One bone of contention is whether Sabbateanism was really as widespread as Scholem claims. There are ideological issues at stake here. Traditional Jews were embarrassed by the movement, especially the participation of respected rabbis in it, and thus sought to present its penetration as minimal and limited to the ignorant classes. Scholem, who saw the movement as a paradigm shift in Jewish life and thought, had reason to demonstrate a wide penetration. The evidence clearly points toward Scholem's view, but several recent studies re-examine the question with reference to specific communities, including Germany, Poland, Morocco, and Yemen.[43]

[42] Goldish, *Sabbatean Prophets*.

[43] On Germany, see Elisheva Carlebach, "The Sabbatian Posture of German Jewry," in Elior, ed., *The Sabbatian Movement*, 1–29. On the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, see Michael Galas, "Sabbatianism in the Seventeenth-Century Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth: A Review of the Sources," in Elior, ed., *The Sabbatian Movement*, 51–63. On Morocco, see Elie Moyal, *The Shabbatean Movement in Morocco: Its History and Sources* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1984). On Yemen, see Yosef Tobi, "The Events of 1667 in the Yemen: Sabbatian Movement or Local Messianic Activity?" in Elior, ed., *The Sabbatian Movement*, 113–28.

One innovative thesis of Scholem that has not been systematically challenged is his claim that Sabbatai suffered from a bipolar personality. The painstaking and detailed evidence he marshaled in support of this point appears to have convinced even the majority of Scholem's most vocal critics.[44]

Study of the Sabbatean movement since Scholem, then, has taken two distinct directions. There continue to be detailed researches by scholars of Jewish thought on the complex theology of Sabbatai, Nathan, Cardoso, and others. At the same time, historians have been reasserting their role in the interpretation of the movement. The thrust of their work has been a focus on social, political, economic, cultural, and inter-religious factors in the rise of Sabbateanism, and, more generally, an emphasis on multiple causes. They have also studied local contexts and they have unearthed numerous new primary sources that throw light on the events of 1665–7.

AFTER THE PASSING OF SABBATAI

The nature of the Sabbatean movement within the Jewish world from this point forward is distinguished by an episodic and local quality. While there were believers of various sorts and levels in communities all over, certain areas and periods constituted "hot spots," often associated with specific personalities. I will attempt to describe some of these.

One of the most interesting centers of Sabbatean activity from the 1670s through the 1690s was the circle of Rabbi Abraham Rovigo (*c*.1650–1713), an Italian kabbalist who lived in Modena and later in Jerusalem. Rovigo's methods and projects offer a model of the directions taken by Jewish Sabbateans during this period. Rovigo studied in Venice with an outstanding teacher, Rabbi Moses Zacuto,[45] then returned to Modena, where he created an active scholarly circle. Rovigo was apparently an enthusiastic Sabbatean believer from the time the movement first appeared until the end of his life. He shared this faith with his close friend, Rabbi Benjamin ben Eliezer ha-Kohen (Vitale), rabbi of Alessandria and later of Reggio. While Rovigo was very secretive about his continued faith with outsiders, ha-Kohen openly displayed a portrait of Sabbatai Zevi in his home and

[44] On this, see note 6 above and, e.g., Joseph Schönberg, "Un mouvement mystic-messianique parmi des juifs de la méditerranée au XVI siècle au point de vue de la medicine," in *Actes du VIII. Congrès International d'Histoire des Sciences* (Florence, 1956), 673–82; Arthur Stern, "Shabatai Zwi, der Pseudo-Messias 1626 bis 1676: Versuch einer psychiatrischen Analyse von Dr. Arthur Stern, Jerusalem," in Benzion Luria, ed., *Zer le-Gevurot: The Zalman Shazar Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1973), 753–9.

[45] On Zacuto's relationship with Sabbateanism, see Scholem, *Researches*, 510–29, including Yehuda Liebes's important bibliographical note.

successfully published a kabbalistic exposition of the Book of Lamentations based on Nathan's thought! The special quality of Rovigo's circle was its series of Sabbatean prophets, which apparently included Rovigo himself at times.[46]

Rovigo's correspondence, much of which has been preserved, begins with him in the position of a young disciple questioning the senior Rabbi Me'ir Rofe, a member of the original Sabbatean circle in Gaza, now living in Livorno. Rofe, Moses Pinheiro (an adherent of Sabbatai since the latter's first revelation of messianic self-perception in 1648), and other believers had gathered in Livorno, which, as an active port and center for former-*conversos*, had been an important link in the Sabbatean network from the beginning of the movement. Isaiah Tishby, who studied Rovigo's correspondence, points out that there is a change in the tone of this correspondence beginning in 1677, when Rofe shifts into the role of questioner and Rovigo is the one with news of developments on the Sabbatean scene.

The occasion of this shift was the appearance of a *magid*, a heavenly mentor like the one experienced by Nathan, in Rovigo's home. The man channeling this prophetic gift was a most interesting figure, Rabbi Issakhar Baer Perlhefter of Prague. Perlhefter was a member of the illustrious Eibeschütz family, later associated with one of the most famous Sabbatean controversies. He lived in Hamburg, Vienna, and Altdorf (where he tutored the anti-Jewish Hebraist Johann Wagenseil), then spent five years as a teacher in the home of Rovigo at Modena, from roughly 1677 to early 1682. This is the period during which he received his magidic revelations, which consisted mainly of messianic commentary on passages of the Jewish mystical classic the Zohar and predictions concerning Sabbatai's reappearance. Perhlhefter afterward served as rabbi in Mantua before returning to Prague, where he worked as an editor, scribe, and ultimately rabbinic judge. Perlhefter was much respected by the believers, among whom his revelations had an enormous impact.[47]

Perlhefter's sudden departure from Rovigo's home in Modena was apparently caused by a very strange episode involving a friend of his

[46] The most complete study of Rovigo and his circle is Gershom Scholem, *The Dreams of the Sabbatean Rabbi Mordecai Ashkenazi: Concerning the Dream Diary of Rabbi Mordecai Ashkenazi, the Student of Rabbi Abraham Rovigo* [Hebrew] (Leipzig, 1930). See also Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 275–6, and Scholem's entry on Rovigo in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. XIV (Jerusalem, 1972), 355–6. For more detail, see references in the following notes.

[47] See Scholem, *Researches*, 530–63, again with Liebes's important notes; Isaiah Tishby, "R. Meir Rofe's Letters of 1675–80 to R. Abraham Rovigo" [Hebrew] *Sefunot* 3–4 (1960), 73–130; Tishby, "The First Sabbatean Maggid in the Study Hall of R. Abraham Rovigo," in Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1964; repr., Jerusalem, 1982), 81–107; Meir Benayahu, *Sefonot* 14; Elqayam, "Rebirth," 85–166.

from Prague, Rabbi Mordecai Eisenstadt. Perlhefter had invited Eisenstadt and his brother, Rabbi Me'ir Eisenstadt, to join him in Italy, knowing that they were among the faithful Sabbateans of his homeland. Someone from the Eisenstadt circle managed to insult Rovigo even before their group arrived in 1681, and though Mordecai attempted to shore up relations, apparently neither Rovigo nor Perlhefter was really appeased. Mordecai then claimed that Sabbatai Zevi was in fact not the true messiah descended from King David, but a sort of pre-messiah messiah, the descendant of Joseph – whereas he, Mordecai, was the true Davidic messiah! Perlhefter became incensed and denounced his erstwhile friend as a fraud and user of illicit magic. He then left Modena to return to Prague, though he kept his ties with the Italian Sabbatean network.[48]

Around 1682, Rovigo's circle included Barukh ben Gershon of Arezzo, who was not a prophet but rather the author of the first major hagiography of Sabbatai Zevi. We know very little of Barukh himself. His tale of Sabbatai's life, however, brings together many important details. It circulated in Italy and probably the Ottoman Empire but was not published until 1912.[49] Among the other visionary figures participating in Rovigo's circle around this time was Tzadok ben Shemaryah of Grodno, another poorly educated Ashkenazic Jew with the gift of a *magid*. Tzadok predicted Sabbatai's reappearance and victorious manifestation in 1695, and he called for Jews to go to Palestine in preparation for this event. We will shortly see that he was part of a chorus of Sabbatean voices calling for *aliyah* ("emigration") to the Holy Land around the turn of the eighteenth century.[50]

The prophetic peak of the Rovigo circle occurred from about 1696 to 1701 with the arrival of Mordecai Ashkenazi of Zholkva, yet another undereducated Polish Jew possessed of a *magid* spirit. Ashkenazi was, according to all accounts, lacking in knowledge of both general rabbinics and Kabbalah when he came to Modena. Rovigo saw some special gift in the eastern visitor and tutored him intensively. Ashkenazi had dreams – which Rovigo helped him to interpret – that quickly exhibited a strong Sabbatean character. Presently the dreams became defined as revelations from a *magid*. As with Perlhefter, Ashkenazi's revelations were largely about messianic interpretations of the Zohar, which helped to reveal facets of the ongoing Sabbatean mission. At the same time, however, Rovigo and Kohen used the *magid* as a sort of all-purpose medium, asking it questions on numerous subjects of a personal, communal, and mystical nature.

[48] See the sources in the previous note. On the concept of Messiah ben Joseph, see Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (New York, 1979), 165–70.

[49] See Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi*, 21–101, including a complete English translation.

[50] See Scholem, *Researches*, 575–90, including Liebes's notes.

Rovigo was tremendously excited about the phenomenon occurring in his home; he saw the *magid* as revealing the meanings of prophecies nobody had ever understood before, and thus portending the end of days. Ultimately, in 1702, Rovigo and Ashkenazi traveled to Jerusalem as part of their preparations for the messianic unfolding. Ashkenazi passed away almost immediately upon their arrival, while Rovigo went on to establish a rabbinic academy (*yeshiva*). He died on a fund-collecting mission back in Italy.

The arrival of Rovigo and Ashkenazi in Jerusalem relates directly to another Sabbatean episode that will be discussed below, but we may pause here for a moment to consider the significance of the Rovigo circle in the history of Sabbateanism. The persistence of prophecy of the type we see in this group was a fundamental aspect of the movement from the very moments of its inception until deep in the eighteenth century. The figure of the ignorant Jew who is vouchsafed prophecy is another leitmotif in the movement, and one that was especially prevalent among Ashkenazim. *Magidim*, which had been a relatively rare phenomenon in Jewish life before Sabbatai and Nathan, became a particularly common vehicle for Sabbatean divination. The structure of a cell around a central figure or small group was typical. So, too, was the increasingly international and intercommunal nature of the Sabbatean network. The Italian Sabbateans stood at a geographical and intellectual nexus between the eastern Europeans and the Ottoman and North African groups, so that Modena functioned as a depot for Sabbatean individuals and ideas moving around the Jewish world. The central role of Ashkenazic Jews in this setting is especially significant because, with the exception of Nathan of Gaza and a few others, Ashkenazim were not important actors at the height of the movement.[51]

The amplified participation of Ashkenazim is discernable in the activities of several additional figures as well. Joshua Heschel Tzoref (1633–1700) was, like Mordecai Ashkenazi and Tzadok of Grodno, only modestly educated. He was raised in Vilna and had to emigrate temporarily during the upheavals of the 1650s. In 1665–6, he became a fervent Sabbatean believer, ascetic, and visionary prophet. A circle of followers gathered around him and were sworn to secrecy about the Sabbatean nature of his teaching. Others flocked to ask him for advice based on his visions. Eventually, Tzoref came to regard himself as the messiah from the house of Joseph – the pre-messianic harbinger of the messiah from the house of David – supporting Sabbatai's mission as the Davidic messiah. His

[51] On the role of Polish Sabbateans, including those mentioned in this discussion, see Scholem, *Studies and Texts*, 68–140.

recorded teaching ran to thousands of pages, and he inspired numerous Jews – rabbis and laymen alike – to adhere to Sabbatean belief. Much of the research on Tzoref has focused on the fact that the Ba'al Shem Tov (d. 1760), founder of the Hasidic movement, owned and respected Tzoref's writings, without apparently recognizing their Sabbatean character.[52]

Another major Sabbatean from Poland was Judah Leib Prossnitz (*c*.1670–*c*.1750), yet one more in the series of unlearned Ashkenazim who began studying the Torah and Kabbalah after a Sabbatean awakening. Prossnitz entered a highly focused period of learning and asceticism, and was soon preaching intense mystical, Sabbatean, and penitential sermons to an enthusiastic group of followers. His attempts to provoke the messianic *dénouement* by means of magic are certainly beholden to the myth of Joseph della Reina, a fabled kabbalist of the late fifteenth century who allegedly attempted the same scheme with disastrous results. Prossnitz began to travel around, bringing his fiery Sabbatean message to various communities in central Europe, but was put under the ban for heresy and sorcery. His period of suppression was, however, short-lived, and he was soon traveling with his message as far as Vienna and Prague. At this point he too identified himself as the messiah of the house of Joseph. Scholars still argue about Prossnitz's influence on the great scholar Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschütz, but there is no doubt that the two men had warm relations. In any case, Prossnitz was one of the central figures in the continued influence of Sabbateanism throughout eighteenth-century Ashkenaz.[53]

We have seen that Tzadok of Grodno announced 1695 as the date of Sabbatai's return; several others among the Ashkenazic augurs had proclaimed that 1706 would be the year that Sabbatai would return to complete his messianic mission. The latter assertion was the occasion for a sort of summit of German, Polish, and Czech Sabbatean leaders at Nikolsburg during late 1698 or early 1699. Several of the participants were veterans of the Rovigo circle. Two figures stood out as leaders of this group. First was Rabbi Ḥayyim Malakh (*c*.1650 to 1660 – 1716 or 1717), one of the most scholarly, well-traveled, and later radical Sabbatean leaders in the region. Malakh had spent time with the Rovigo circle in Italy, but also with Sabbatai Zevi's secretary, Samuel Primo, as well as with Abraham Miguel Cardoso, in Edirne. He later stayed with the hard-core Sabbatean coterie in Salonika. Malakh was an enormous force for Sabbateanism in Polish rabbinic circles as well as a chief promoter of *aliyah* in preparation

[52] See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 352–3 (= *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. XVI, 1222–3); Scholem, *Researches*, ch. 7.

[53] See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 441–2 (= *EJ* 13, 1240–1); Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, chs. 5–6.

for 1706. He, with a group of about 150 followers, apparently proceeded through Turkey to Palestine in 1695.[54]

Malakh's partner in this endeavor was the shadowy figure of Rabbi Judah Ḥasid (*c.*1650 to 1660 – 1700). Like Malakh, he was a rabbinic scholar who attracted both learned and lay Jews to his "Holy Brotherhood" of Palestine-bound Sabbateans. Hasid preached to throngs of enthralled Jews across Germany and Austria, raising money and gaining followers for the settlement in Jerusalem. He did indeed arrive in Jerusalem with a group of unknown size, but died within days of his arrival (as did several others.) The group managed to maintain some cohesiveness after Hasid's passing and gained traction when Rovigo arrived in 1702 to establish his messianic rabbinical college. Around the same time, Malakh and several others from the group traveled to Europe to raise money for the Ashkenazic community of Jerusalem, which – whether it was known to European Jews or not – was now in the hands of the believers.

Opponents of the Sabbateans finally succeeded in publicizing the Sabbatean character of the Hasid group in Jerusalem and had its members removed from communal leadership by around 1705. The results of this fiasco were striking. The Jerusalem Ashkenazic community shrank by half as members converted to Islam or Christianity, returned to their communities in Europe, or joined new Sabbatean enclaves elsewhere. One of these cells, at Mannheim, eventually degenerated completely into religious anarchy. The Hasid group was the last stage of a half-century-long wave of immigration to Palestine, but its failure and tainted legacy apparently helped to stifle group *aliyah* for two more generations.[55]

Having now examined some of the Sabbatean activities and centers in Italy, eastern Europe, and Palestine, we will take a brief look at the peripatetic Abraham Miguel Cardoso and his circle, and at the Turkish enclaves. Cardoso wrote a great deal and has been studied extensively. He is certainly one of the strangest, most interesting, and creative Sabbatean characters in a crowded field. Cardoso was born the same year as Sabbatai Zevi, 1626, and outlived him by thirty years; he was killed by his nephew in a quarrel in 1706 at the age of 80.

Cardoso was born in Rio Seco, Spain, to a *converso* family. He studied medicine and theology in Salamanca, then fled Spain with his brother, Isaac, when he was about 21 years old. He lived for several years in Venice

[54] See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 429–31 (= *EJ* 11, 818–19); Scholem, *Researches*, 579–90, including Liebes's notes.

[55] Meir Benayahu, "The 'Holy Brotherhood' of R. Judah Ḥasid and their Settlement in Jerusalem" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 3–4 (1960), 133–82. Note that there is a sizable English abstract on [11]–[14].

and Livorno, continuing his medical studies and immersing himself in rabbinic texts. During this period, he expressed deep exasperation at the rabbis' inability to explain certain essential concepts about the nature of God. He departed for the Ottoman Empire around 1659 in search of teachers who could help him to overcome his skeptical crisis. He studied Kabbalah in Egypt for some years, then settled in Tripoli shortly before the outbreak of the Sabbatean movement. He claimed to have experienced dreams and revelations even before Sabbatai appeared. What is certain is that Cardoso rapidly became a fervent supporter, theologian, and prophet of the movement when the good news of the messiah reached him.

After Sabbatai's apostasy, Cardoso continued to support him enthusiastically, and wrote numerous volumes of Sabbatean theology as well as lengthy epistles. Scholem points out that Cardoso's writing is characterized by the juxtaposition of brilliant analytical discourses, reflecting his academic education, with disjointed flights of mystical imagination. Cardoso reports numerous visions of his own as well as those of his disciples. Recently discovered documents by Christian witnesses give a sense of the great prophetic ferment among his group with the approach of 1706. The main conduit of these Sabbatean prophecies was again revelation through a *magid*.

Cardoso claimed for a period, as so many others had, that he was the messiah from the house of Joseph. Though very observant, and considered a Sabbatean conservative, Cardoso's theology was often radical and heretical, with a strong element of Gnostic dualism. He was open about his faith and strongly critical of other theologians of the movement, with the result that he was forced out of one community after another and spent most of his life moving every few years. After Tripoli, he lived in Tunis, Izmir, Brusa, Rodosto, Istanbul, Crete, Palestine, and Alexandria. Among the other Sabbateans against whom he polemicized were Nathan, the "Holy Brotherhood" of Hasid and Malakh, Samuel Primo, and the radical Salonika apostate group. Cardoso's ability to maintain his precarious livelihood while studying, traveling, polemicizing, and writing voluminously is astonishing.[56]

Cardoso's strong reaction to the situation in Salonika was by no means unique, for a group of the leading Sabbatean believers in Salonika and Edirne had led a large contingent of believers to convert to Islam in the 1680s. This group counted among its participants several famous rabbis, including members of the Florentin and Philosoph families. While this movement, called Dönme, takes us out of the realm of Judaism and thus beyond the scope of

[56] See note 26 above, and Richard H. Popkin and Stephanie Chasin, "The Sabbatean Movement in Turkey (1703–1708) and Reverberations in Northern Europe," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 94, 2 (2004) 300–17.

this chapter, it had profound reverberations among both Sabbatean believers and non-believers throughout the Jewish world. The non-believers were predictably shocked and disgusted. Many Jewish believers, on the other hand, felt that, while this was not a path for everyone, following Sabbatai into apostasy might have a spiritual purpose. They saw the Dönme not as true apostates, but as fellow-believers on a mission into the realm of the *kelippot* ("spiritual husks"). The Dönme practiced Islam outwardly but kept Sabbatai's "eighteen precepts" of practice and the liturgical traditions of Sabbateanism in secret. They soon split into three groups, divided by ideology.[57]

The Sabbateans of the central Ottoman communities (Istanbul, Salonika, Izmir, Bursa, Kastoria, Edirne) had a particularly potent and learned attachment to the movement because Sabbatai and Nathan, and later Cardoso, spent so much time in that region. The legacy of these figures' theological teachings and their powerful personalities is preserved in numerous manuscripts composed by Ottoman followers. Meir Benayahu, Gershom Scholem, and others have shown how the wellsprings of the faith were spread from believers in this region to the newer centers in Italy, Germany, Poland, and elsewhere. Even Jacob Frank, leader of a radical post-Sabbatean cult in eighteenth-century Poland, had gone to study with the Ottoman Sabbateans as a prelude to his own activities.[58]

The generation of Jews who had participated in the ecstasy at the height of the movement in 1665–6 was dying out by the turn of the eighteenth century. It is a testament to the power of Sabbatean beliefs, however, that a new generation of leaders carried on Sabbatai's legacy. Hakham Solomon Ayllon (*c*.1660 or 1664 – 1728), for example, who led the London Sephardic community from 1689 until 1699, and that of Amsterdam from 1700 until his death, had studied with Nathan briefly in Salonika as a youth, probably converted to Islam with the Dönme for a brief period, and shown every indication of being a committed Sabbatean throughout his career.[59] Wolf Eibeschütz (if not his famous and revered

[57] See, e.g., Scholem, *Studies and Texts*; Scholem, *Researches*, ch. 4; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 327–32; Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, chs. 4–6; Baer, *Dönme*; Sisman, *Burden*.

[58] See *Sefunot* 3–4 and 14; Harris Lenowitz, "Leaving Turkey: The Dönme Comes to Poland," *Kabbalah* 8 (2003), 65–113. I will not attempt to discuss the extensive Sabbatean developments in Yemen, Morocco, and Egypt for lack of space.

[59] See Yael Nadav, "A Kabbalistic Treatise of R. Solomon Aylion" [Hebrew] *Sefunot* 3–4 (1960), 301–47; Benayahu in *Sefunot* 14 (1971–7), 147–60; Matt Goldish, "An Historical Irony: Solomon Aailion's Court Tries the Case of a Repentant Sabbatean," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 27, 1–2 (1993), 5–12; Goldish, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in the 1689 London Sermons of Hakham Solomon Aailion," in C. Goodblatt and H. Kreisel, eds., *Tradition, Heterodoxy and Religious Culture: Judaism and Christianity in the Early Modern Period* (Be'er Sheva, 2007), 139–65.

father, Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschütz) was an active Sabbatean prophet and proselytizer in the second half of the eighteenth century. Slowly, however, the practicing Jewish core of the believers dissipated over the course of the eighteenth century, and the movement was represented increasingly by the Muslim Dönme sect and the mixed Christian cult of Frankists in Poland, Bohemia, and Germany.[60]

The Sabbateans, with their strong tendencies toward various forms of antinomianism, their secrecy, their willingness to dissemble, their often deeply heretical theology, their unconstrained prophetic inclination, and their tradition of apostasy, naturally awakened fierce opposition around the Jewish world. At the height of the movement, Hakham Jacob Sasportas, living at that time in Hamburg, was the most powerful among a tiny group of dissenting voices. It is interesting that, after Sabbatai's apostasy, Sasportas usually declined to take the remaining believers very seriously, seeing them as a fringe lunatic element. Perhaps the most common rabbinic response to Sabbateanism after the apostasy was to sweep it under the rug with the assumption that it would anyhow disappear very quickly. Others, however, were less sanguine about the fate of the faith and took up the cudgels to identify and battle it at every turn. The two figures most famous for this were Hakham Moses Ḥagiz, a Torah scholar from Jerusalem who traveled around Europe and the Mediterranean denouncing believers; and Rabbi Jacob Emden, a leading Talmudist and intellectual, whose most famous attack was upon the great Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschütz.[61]

Thus, the most successful Jewish messianic movement since Christianity was propagated and deprecated for well over a century after its inception, fomenting controversy on the one hand, and a series of minor revolutions in Jewish thought and practice on the other. While Scholem's specific theory about the impact of Sabbateanism on Haskalah and Reform has been rejected by most scholars, I myself have followed the theory of Hillel Levine that Sabbateanism and Frankism had a kind of "Cargo Cult" effect. In this context, it means that some forms of Sabbateanism accustomed believers to transgressing the Jewish commandments in certain ritual situations, and that effect remained in place even as the cause for it shifted over time from radical messianism to Enlightenment.[62] There can be no

[60] See, e.g., Pawel Maciejko, "Sabbatian Charlatans: The First Jewish Cosmopolitans," *European Review of History* 17, 3 (2010), 361–78; Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816* (Philadelphia, 2011).

[61] See Moyal, *Rabbi Yaakob Sasportas*; Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatean Controversies* (New York, 1990); Jacob J. Schacter, "Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1988).

[62] See Hillel Levine, "Frankism as a 'Cargo Cult' and the Haskalah Connection: Myth, Ideology, and the Modernization of Jewish Consciousness," in F. Molino and P. C.

doubt that Frankism brought deeply antinomian and even radical practices into the world of Polish Jewry in ways that both preceded and exceeded the effects of Haskalah.

While there might be a difference of opinion about whether ritual transgressions were a good or bad development for the Jewish community, other innovations of the Sabbateans might more commonly be seen as positive. Ze'ev Gries has argued persuasively that the study of Kabbalah among European Jews increased markedly as a result of Sabbateanism.[63] The complex theology of Nathan of Gaza and other Sabbatean theologians remained popular reading among kabbalists – including non-Sabbatean ones – for generations. Sabbatean rabbis were among the most distinguished in the Jewish world of the late seventeenth century and responsible for the authorship of many important works. Among these are Mordecai Ashkenazi's *Eshel Avraham*, and (apparently) the anonymous *Hemdat ha-Yamim*. (One of the innovations introduced to the larger Jewish world by this work is the *Tu be-Shevat* Seder, popular today with Jewish Renewal and eco-Jews.) The peripatetic Sabbatean emissaries helped to create networks of relationships that connected Jewish communities in ways that would become critical to Jewish history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[64]

More generally, Gershom Scholem argues that the Jewish world needs the occasional radical movement in order to "air out" desiccated and uninspiring tendencies and bring in fresh energy.[65] For better or worse, the ideas of Sabbateanism had a direct impact on the Hasidic movement and were deeply influential in the development of Zionism, several of whose pioneers (including Nahum Sokolow, Abba Hillel Silver, Zalman Shazar, and Itzhak Ben-Zvi) were avid students of messianic history. Zionism has often been described as a form of messianism and its historically minded theorists have hoped to learn lessons from Sabbateanism. Indeed, the *aliyah* of Sabbateans around 1700 is often considered the first modern mass-movement of Jews to the Land of Israel, and is thus a precursor of the Zionist project.

Ultimately, however, the judicious historian should not read the long and complex history of Sabbateanism mainly through a whiggish lens, determining its significance according to its impact on later developments. It should rather be seen as a set of ideas and events that reveal a great deal

Albert, eds., *Essays in Modern Jewish History: A Tribute to Ben Halperin* (Rutherford, NJ, 1982), 81–94; Goldish, *Sabbatean Prophets*, 168–9.

[63] Ze'ev Gries, *The Book in the Jewish World, 1700–1900* (London, 2007). Note that Gries inverts the theory of Scholem, who claimed that study of Kabbalah was the *cause* of Sabbateanism's success.

[64] On this, see Ruderman, "Jews on the Move," in *Early Modern Jewry*, esp. 33.

[65] See especially the beginning of his *Footsteps of the Messiah* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1944), 5.

about its own historical contexts, teaching us about the horizons of Jewish identity in the early modern era.

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CHAPTER 19

SCIENCE, MEDICINE, AND JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

ADAM SHEAR

The study of medicine and natural philosophy among Jewish intellectuals and the study and dissemination of "Jewish philosophy" represent two interwoven traditions of scholarship and learning among early modern Jews. In principle, the former describes Jews engaged in a universalistic activity where the Jewishness of the participants is not directly relevant to the ideational content of the "philosophy."[1] The latter, however, may be seen as an internal theological activity. However, a considerable overlap can be found among the practitioners and students of both intellectual activities. Participation in the first activity often raised the central problem of the second: reconciliation of philosophical traditions emanating from outside Jewish sources with the revealed sources of wisdom that were authoritative in rabbinic Judaism.

This dynamic begins before our period. Medieval texts studied by early modern Jews, in manuscript form and increasingly in their new avatars in print, offered a legacy of varied interest in natural philosophy and medicine.[2] Many Jews in the medieval period trained as physicians and were exposed in their studies to Aristotelian natural philosophy and the medical teachings of Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna.[3] Even for those medieval Jews who were little interested in physics or metaphysics for their own sake, the importance of astronomical study was validated for calendar calculation, and, for some thinkers, for the possibility of astrological interpretation of the Bible.[4]

[1] Cf. Bernard Goldstein, "Astronomy and the Jewish Community in Early Islam," *Aleph* 1 (2007), 18–19.

[2] For overviews and bibliography, see David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery* (New Haven, 1995), ch. 1; Noah J. Efron, *Judaism and Science: A Historical Introduction* (Westport, CT, 2007), ch. 3; Gad Freudenthal, ed., *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Cambridge, 2011).

[3] Efron, *Judaism and Science*, 98–107; Joseph Shatzmiller, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society* (Berkeley, 1994); Harry J. Friedenwald, *The Jews and Medicine* (Baltimore, 1944).

[4] Shlomo Sela, *Abraham ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science* (Leiden, 2003); Reimund Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der astrologischen Literatur der Juden* (Tübingen, 2006).

The contemplation of nature and its wonders was also seen by many thinkers as having religious value, whether in a contemplative manner, as part of a program of reconciliation of Aristotle and the Torah, or as part of a Maimonidean program that validated the study of physics as a quasi-religious obligation.[5] Indeed, the legacy of Moses Maimonides was crucial in offering a roadmap for reconciliation of Judaism, Aristotelian philosophy, medical practice, and scientific study.[6]

Most philosophical study was on an individual basis: science and philosophy usually did not directly enter the curriculum of the *yeshiva*. Few Jews studied in universities.[7] This seems to have limited Jewish participation in the production of original scientific knowledge, with some notable exceptions. Some Jewish physicians had relationships with non-Jewish counterparts and institutions, and thus access to wider scientific vistas.[8] But in general the study of science and philosophy for Jewish intellectuals was linked to study of sacred texts, and scientific interests were closely linked to theological concerns.

Another connection between natural philosophy and religious philosophy was their common origin: in the absorption into Jewish culture of textual traditions from the outside. Medieval Jewish encounters with science were largely encounters with texts from the Greek and Arabic philosophical traditions, and, later, encounters with texts in Latin and other European languages. When the teachings of the two textual traditions seemed to contradict one another, a variety of methods for resolving contradictions and synthesizing the traditions emerged, and spurred the development of much of medieval Jewish religious philosophy. At the communal level, however, such tensions often resulted in public controversies.[9]

Questions of legitimacy arose: could Jews study material from outside the "Torah"? If such texts had worthwhile information, did this not diminish the status of the Torah? Or was philosophical study essential to

[5] The literature on philosophy as a religious pursuit in medieval Judaism is vast. For a recent and interesting view of the subject that introduces the concept of "philosophical religion" in the western tradition, including Judaism, see Carlos Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions from Plato to Spinoza: Reason, Religion, and Autonomy* (Cambridge, 2012).

[6] See, e.g., Fred Rosner and Samuel Kottek, eds., *Moses Maimonides: Physician, Scientist, and Philosopher* (Northvale, NJ, 1993); Shalom Rosenberg and Charles Manekin, "Philosophical Observations on Maimonides' Critique of Galen," *Koroth* 9 (1988), 246–54.

[7] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 50–1.

[8] See Shatzmiller, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society*, 22–35.

[9] For an overview, see Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, "The Maimonidean Controversy," in D. Frank and O. Leaman, eds., *History of Jewish Philosophy* (New York, 1997), 331–49.

understanding the Torah and thus desirable, even obligatory?[10] An all-encompassing permission to study "Greek" wisdom was found in the persistent myth that Plato, Aristotle, and other ancients had studied with Jewish teachers and the Torah was the source of all knowledge.[11] When early modern science challenged Aristotelian physics, Ptolemaic astronomy, and Galenic medicine, some Jews searched for ways to show the new findings were compatible with ancient rabbinic teachings while gentiles had transmitted the teachings incorrectly.

Jewish intellectuals in the early modern period contended with some of the same issues: how to legitimate the study of material that seemingly emanated from outside revealed sources; how to explain apparent contradictions between scientific texts or philosophical reasoning and those revealed sources; how to incorporate new ideas into a tradition-centric culture; and how to negotiate boundaries while engaging in endeavors that brought Jews into close contact with non-Jewish texts, ideas, and persons. However, new issues emerged and some old issues became more acute.[12] The formation of a Jewish community in northern Italy composed of Jews from every cultural arena of the medieval world brought different conceptualizations of the role of philosophy in Jewish culture, together with an ongoing intellectual tradition of synthesizing philosophy with other fields. Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire brought with them fifteenth-century conflicts and concerns over the putative role of rationalist philosophy in weakening Jewish faith. The printing press allowed the circulation of medieval texts, including philosophical ones, to every area of the Jewish world, including Jewish cultures that had previously had relatively little exposure to the rationalist philosophical tradition, such as Ashkenaz. The integration of former *conversos* into the Spanish–Portuguese Jewish communities of Venice, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and London brought a large community of men with secular education into the Jewish world.[13]

TEXTS IN NEW CONTEXTS

Early modern Jewish study of science, medicine, and philosophy was largely based on study of medieval texts. While new treatises were written and, toward the end of our period, Jews were responding to contemporary

[10] See Herbert Davidson, "The Study of Philosophy as a Religious Obligation," in S. D. Goitein, ed., *Religion in a Religious Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1974), 53–68.

[11] See Abraham Melamed, *Rakaḥot ve-Tabaḥot: ha-Mitos al Makor ha-Ḥakhamot* (Jerusalem, 2010).

[12] For a broad overview, see David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010).

[13] See Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, ch. 10.

scientific literature, the transmission of medieval texts into a new technological context – print – was crucial, even though many texts continued to circulate in manuscript. By 1500, much of the Greek philosophical tradition, medieval Jewish discussion of that tradition in Judeo-Arabic, and new works of Latin scholasticism were available in Hebrew.[14]

Early modern Jews continued to serve as mediators between the Islamic and Christian worlds.[15] Exile and migration led to new cultural centers for Jews and reinvigorated travel and trade among Jews in and around the Mediterranean, as well as the creation of new Jewish trade routes spanning the Christian and Muslim worlds. Translation of scientific material into Hebrew continued in the early modern period, and Jews served as translators of some material from Hebrew to Latin as late as the middle of the sixteenth century in Italy.[16] Connections between Italy and the Ottoman Empire meant that Jews like "David the Mathematician" could bring up-to-date astronomical data from Venice to Salonika and Constantinople in the middle of the sixteenth century.[17]

Most of the new contexts for the study and dissemination of science in the early modern period – e.g., scientific societies and public libraries – were not major arenas for Jews (at least until the eighteenth century). But the most significant new arena was print, and Jews were full participants in the print revolution.[18] A large amount of scientific material was published before 1800 in Hebrew type, dealing with astronomy, calendar calculation, "destinies" (i.e. astrology and chiromancy), geography, mathematics, and medicine, as well as general works on nature and the natural sciences.[19] More than half of these works dealt with calendar calculation or geography;

[14] See Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolsmetscher* (Berlin, 1893); and the case studies in Tony Lévy, "The Establishment of the Mathematical Bookshelf of the Medieval Hebrew Scholar: Translations and Translators," *Science in Context* 10 (1997), 431–51; Shatzmiller, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society*, 38–47; Lola Ferre, "The Incorporation of Foreign Medical Literature," in Carmen Caballero-Navas and Esperanza Alfonso, eds., *Late Medieval Jewish Identities: Iberia and Beyond* (New York, 2010), 171–83; Mauro Zonta, *Hebrew Scholasticism in the Fifteenth Century: A History and Sourcebook* (Dordrecht, 2006); Ruth Glasner, "The Peculiar History of Aristotelianism among Spanish Jews," in R. Fontaine and G. Freudenthal, eds., *Studies in the History of Culture and Science* (Leiden, 2011), 363–81.

[15] Avner Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1560–1660* (Baltimore, 2010), 5.

[16] See Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters*, ch. 5.

[17] Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges*, 21–4.

[18] See Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 52.

[19] Ester Lapon-Kandelshein and Shifra Baruchson-Arbib, "Hebrew Scientific Publications from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries: Social and Cultural Aspects," *La Bibliofilia* 10, 2 (2002), 171.

their increasing availability can be seen as important markers of a basic scientific or at least mathematical literacy in the Jewish population.[20] A much smaller number of works dealt with theoretical or "pure" astronomy or other natural sciences. A large number of medical works were printed, a few aimed at Jewish doctors (who could access medical texts in other languages), and many popularizations.[21] Over time, more and more texts were printed, with the eighteenth century as the beginning of a much larger number of editions.[22]

Popularizations and practical works were printed more often than learned treatises on particular topics. Although works of Jewish religious thought were more likely to be printed than Hebrew translations of Greek and Arabic philosophical works or new commentaries on those works, even these did not circulate in large numbers.[23] For example, relatively few libraries of Jews in Mantua at the end of the sixteenth century held works of Jewish philosophy; classics like Albo's *Sefer ha-Ikkarim*, Halevi's *Kuzari*, and Maimonides's *Guide* were found in no more than 50 of 430 Jewish households.[24] The drop-off from there to the more technical works of Jewish and Islamic philosophers was considerable.

Of course, there are exceptions. In the fall of 1559, Jacob Marcaria published first editions of Hebrew translations of works by Aristotle and Averroes in the northern Italian town of Riva del Garda.[25] Given that some 800 Hebrew manuscripts of works by Averroes are extant, perhaps Marcaria was right to judge that there would be some demand for these works.[26] But the relatively late date of such printings is also telling: nobody had thought to publish these works in the first eight decades of Hebrew printing. Despite an increase in texts available due to print, we still see a relatively small number of Jewish intellectuals in the sixteenth century engaged in natural philosophy.

We gain a different perspective if we focus on the ways that print reshaped intellectuals' expectations, and on the ways that print affected

[20] Ibid. See also Elisheva Carlebach, *Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2011).

[21] Lapon-Kandelshein and Baruchson-Arbib, "Hebrew Scientific Publications," 170.

[22] Ibid., 174.

[23] Shaul Regev, "The Study, Writing, and Printing of Philosophical Books in the Sixteenth Century" [Hebrew], *Peamim* 97 (Fall 2003), 81–105; see also Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges*, 85–6.

[24] Shifra Baruchson, *Sefarim ve-Kor'im: Tarbut ha-Keriah Shel Yehude Italya be-Shilhe ha-Renasans* (Ramat Gan, 1993), 149–52.

[25] [Pseudo-]Aristotle, *Igeret ha-Musar*; Averroes, *Kizure ibn Rushd al Shema Tiv'i*; and Averroes, *Kol Melekhet ha-Higayon mi-Kizure ibn Rushd*.

[26] See Collective Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts (http://aleph.nli.org.il/F?func=find-b-0&local_base=nnlmss&con_lng=eng).

scholarly habitus in the period. Certainly, Jewish scholars, like their non-Jewish counterparts, focused on the ability of the press to make controversial work more accessible. The exoteric nature of print as well as new understandings of an imagined yet unknown audience for printed works meant that bookmen had to think about the implications of what they published. In addition to publishing works by Averroes and Aristotle, Marcaria also published the first edition of Gersonides's *Wars of the Lord*. His preface simultaneously tries to sell the work to potential readers and to head off concerns such readers might have about a work that had been dubbed "Wars against the Lord" by some critics.[27] In the 1550s, the Usque press in Ferrara issued works from both sides of the fifteenth-century Sephardic debate over Maimonidean philosophy.[28] And debate over the legitimacy of philosophical study broke out in Prague and Poznan in the same decade, due in part to the arrival of printed editions from Italy.[29]

Although medieval manuscripts continued to circulate and new manuscripts were copied, print had clearly become understood as the default medium of publication, the most desired form of publication for most authors. Scholars perceived the unavailability of a work in print as a severe limitation on the dissemination of the ideas in that work.[30] Some intellectuals went in search of "lost" (i.e. unprinted) material to publish.[31]

PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE FROM SPAIN TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman Empire was home to a large group of early modern Jewish intellectuals concerned with questions about the legitimacy of different modes of inquiry and the authority of competing textual traditions. From the fifteenth century on, attitudes toward the study of philosophy – in its various forms – varied widely among different Jewish thinkers and across different cultural contexts.

In this range of views, of course, the early modern reflected the late medieval. New debates over the legitimacy of philosophical study took place in Spain in the tumultuous century of 1391–1492. While Maimonides

[27] *Sefer Milḥamot ha-Shem* (Riva di Trento, 1560), iv.

[28] Adam Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167–1900* (Cambridge, 2008), 122–3.

[29] Elhanan Reiner, "The Attitude of Ashkenazi Society to the New Science in the Sixteenth Century," *Science in Context* 10 (1997), 589–603; Reiner, "The Ashkenazic Elite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book," *Polin Studies in Polish Jewry* 10 (1997), 85–98.

[30] For an example, see Shear, *Kuzari*, 127.

[31] Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges*, 85–7.

remained a touchstone for almost all thinkers, an open critique of Maimonides re-emerged at the turn of the fifteenth century among several Spanish and Provençal thinkers. Another group, however, reinvigorated a moderate Maimonideanism that saw Maimonides's project as one of reconciliation of philosophical reason with revealed tradition.[32]

Ambivalence over the relationship between philosophy and religion does not seem to have diminished the study of the non-religious scientific aspects of the Aristotelian corpus (physics and logic, for example) or the study of medicine or astronomy among fifteenth-century Spanish Jews. Fifteenth-century Spain was the locus for significant Jewish engagement with Latin scholasticism and for the systematic study of Aristotelian works.[33] Jews remained scientifically active, engaged with non-Jewish scientific circles, and in some cases were able to relate their scientific and "Jewish" interests.[34]

The available evidence points to a continuation of pre-Expulsion scientific and medical study and practice by Iberian Jews and *conversos* outside Spain, in the Ottoman Empire and North Africa.[35] Philosophical and scientific study migrated with Sephardic rabbis to new centers after 1492, particularly Salonika and Constantinople. Philosophical study gained a place in some *yeshivot*, scholars commented on the Aristotelian corpus, translated fifteenth-century astronomical texts, planned encyclopedic treatments of philosophy, and philosophy was integral to preaching and biblical commentary.[36] Such activity encompassed not only the first generation of exiles but also their scholarly descendants through the late sixteenth century, such as Moses Almosnino, Aaron Afia, Solomon le-Beit Halevi, and others. The study of philosophy and science was justified

[32] See Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity," in Frank and Leaman, eds., *History of Jewish Philosophy*, 500–9; Herbert Davidson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy in the Sixteenth Century," in Bernard Dov Cooperman, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 106–14; Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, *Happiness in Premodern Judaism* (Cincinnati, 2003), 379–411; Shear, *Kuzari*, 78–91.

[33] See Zonta, *Hebrew Scholasticism*.

[34] For the prominent example of Abraham Zacuto, see José Chabas and Bernard R. Goldstein, *Astronomy in the Iberian Peninsula and the Transmission from Manuscript to Print* (Philadelphia, 1990).

[35] See Eleazer Gutwirth, "Language and Medicine in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire," in Jürgen Helm and Annette Winkelmann, eds., *Religious Confessions and the Sciences in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden, 2001), 82–7.

[36] Tirosh-Rothschild, "Eve of Modernity," 530–2; Joseph R. Hacker, "The Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in I. Twersky and B. Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 95–136.

in familiar terms: as part of the encompassing wisdom of the Torah. Jewish and non-Jewish sources were ultimately compatible if read correctly.[37] Rabbis in this tradition distinguished between illegitimate usage of "Greek wisdom" and approaches that could be used by Jews to complement Torah study.[38] By the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, philosophical study seems to have been increasingly disconnected from rabbinic scholarship and biblical exegesis, and preaching was increasingly non-theological.[39]

PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE IN EARLY MODERN ITALY

In the late Middle Ages and through the fifteenth century, Jewish intellectuals in northern Italy embraced a Maimonidean program of integration of philosophy and Judaism, the study of Aristotelian physics, and some more technical astronomical study.[40] While "Hebrew scholasticism" continued to some extent among Sephardic exiles in the Ottoman Empire, Italy was the major arena for the study of Aristotle among Jews in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[41] Jewish medical students enrolled in Padua would have studied Aristotle and Aristotelian thought carefully throughout the period.[42] Elijah Delmedigo, a Jew from Crete, taught Aristotelian philosophy at Padua in the late fifteenth century, and Jews such as Jacob Mantino and Abraham de Balmes were active in translating Aristotelian and Averroistic texts into Latin in the sixteenth century.[43]

However, the synthesis of philosophy with revelation in Italy was broader even than a moderate Maimonideanism and an interest in

[37] Hacker, "Intellectual Activity," 124–7.

[38] See ibid.; and Hacker, "Agitation against Philosophy in the Sixteenth Century: Studies in Menachem de Lonsono's *Derekh Ḥayim*" [Hebrew], in J. Dan and J. Hacker, eds., *Meḥkarim be-Kabbalah, be-Filosofyah Yehudit uve-Sifrut ha-Musar veha-Hagut: Mugashim li-Yesha'ayah Tishbi* (Jerusalem, 1986), 95–136; Shaul Regev, "The Study of Philosophy in Fifteenth-Century Jewish Thought" [Hebrew], *Da'at* 16 (1985–6), 57–85; Regev, "The Ambivalent Attitude toward Philosophy in the Sixteenth Century," *Revue des Études juives* 161 (2002), 139–58; Davidson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy," 118.

[39] Hacker, "Intellectual Activity," 128–33.

[40] See Tirosh-Samuelson, "Eve of Modernity," 512–14; Zonta, *Hebrew Scholasticism*, 214; Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, *Between Worlds: The Life and Thought of Rabbi David ben Judah Messer Leon* (Albany, NY, 1991), esp. 11–39; Y. Tzvi Langermann, "The Scientific Writings of Mordekhai Finzi," *Italia* 7 (1988), 7–44.

[41] See Zonta, *Hebrew Scholasticism*, 24–9, and the references cited there.

[42] See David A. Lines, "University Natural Philosophy in Renaissance Italy: The Decline of Aristotelianism?" in Cees Leijenhurst, Christoph Lüthy, and Johannes M. M. H. Thijssen, eds., *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden, 2002), 325–42.

[43] See Tirosh-Samuelson, "Eve of Modernity," 515–17.

Aristotelianism. From the late medieval period onwards, we can find in Italy an approach that tended to synthesize Aristotelian philosophy with Platonism, Kabbalah, magic, hermeticism, and humanism. Thinkers inclined toward "scholasticism" also pursued "humanist" interests.[44] A distinctive form of Italian Kabbalah also emerged drawing on this synthetic and philosophizing approach.[45]

The notion that circulated in the circles of Renaissance thinkers of a common wisdom from antiquity (*prisca theologia*) could serve Italian Jewish intellectuals as a legitimation for the study of nature and could be easily adapted to the broader myth of the Jewish origin of knowledge. Such myths also provided a basis for a basically synthetic approach to disparate traditions.

The sixteenth century did see critiques of Aristotle among Jewish intellectuals such as Yeḥiel Nissim da Pisa, Judah Moscato, Azariah Figo, and David del Bene, who deployed a range of anti-rationalist arguments.[46] Some late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian figures expressed compunction over engagement with non-Jewish sources, such as Abraham Portaleone who famously "repented" of his study of philosophy and medicine in the introduction to *Shilte Gibborim* (published in Mantua, 1612). In fact, however, the writings of all of these figures contained a great deal of scientific information, and their anti-rationalist positions were mitigated by a legitimation of scientific and philosophical study. Even among these apparent anti-rationalists, the synthetic approach to "reason and faith" remained more typical. And, despite some skepticism and critical discussion about the hoary legends of the Jewish origins of philosophy, most Jewish and Christian scholars continued to give credence to the myth.[47] Azariah de' Rossi's critical approach, which sought to distinguish purely rationalistic inquiry from authorized traditions, was ultimately not as popular as the traditional approach that demanded

[44] David B. Ruderman, "The Italian Renaissance and Jewish Thought," in A. Rabil, ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy* (Philadelphia, 1988), I, 382–433; Robert Bonfil, introduction, in Judah Messer Leon, *Sefer Nofet Tsufim* (Jerusalem, 1981); Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1990), 270–323.

[45] See most recently Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy (1280–1510)* (New Haven, 2011).

[46] See Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities*, 284–98; Alessandro Guetta, "Religious Life and Jewish Erudition in Pisa: Yeḥiel Nissim da Pisa and the Crisis of Aristotelianism," in David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri, eds., *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia, 2004), 86–108; Shear, *Kuzari*, 116–25, 171–4; Davidson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy," 116–18; Bonfil, "Preaching as Mediation between Elite and Popular Cultures," in David Ruderman, ed., *Preachers of the Italian Ghetto* (Berkeley, 1992), 67–88; Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 185–212.

[47] Melamed, *Rakaḥot ve-Tabaḥot*, 298–321.

synthesis of equally authoritative sources of knowledge and maintained that the Torah encompassed all knowledge.[48]

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, some of this synthesis had broken down. There appears to have been some decline in interest in scholastic philosophy among late sixteenth-century Italian Jewish intellectuals as the more theurgic and mythical currents of Safedian Kabbalah arrived in Italy.[49] However, the study of science continued to be justified by most Italian Jewish intellectuals from the late sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. David Ruderman has traced out several different positions that emerged in this new climate, arguing (at least for heuristic purposes) that three main groups of thinkers emerged: first, a group that continued the older forms of integrating philosophy and Judaism – many connected to university study in Padua – but were generally critical of Kabbalah; second, a group that was firmly committed to the new Safedian Kabbalah and viewed science as a secondary although legitimate complement to kabbalistic study; and third, an anti-Aristotelian, anti-rationalist group that integrated Kabbalah and science.[50] In many ways, that third group most closely resembles the older Italian tradition of synthesis and a kind of philosophically informed anti-rationalism.

The figure of Joseph Delmedigo looms large over discussions of Jewish views of science and philosophy in the early modern period. He was a graduate of the University of Padua, an enthusiastic proponent of Copernicanism, enjoyed close relations with Karaites, traveled widely through eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire, and was also attracted to Kabbalah. As such, he presented something of a conundrum to scholars from the nineteenth century onward who had trouble reconciling the image of the rational scientist with his esoteric interests. Recognizing the relationship between esotericism and science, as well as the synthesizing tradition in Italian Jewish culture, offers contemporary scholarship a new understanding of Delmedigo.[51]

[48] See Gianfranco Miletto, "Tradition and Innovation: Religion, Science, and Jewish Culture between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Helm and Winkelmann, eds., *Religious Confessions*, 99–107; Giuseppe Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy in Jewish Garb: Foundations and Challenges in Judaism on the Eve of Modernity* (Leiden, 2009), 105–7.

[49] Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities*, 280; Moshe Idel, "Italy in Safed, Safed in Italy: Toward an Interactive History of Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah," in Ruderman and Veltri, eds., *Cultural Intermediaries*, 239–69; and Idel "Printing Kabbalah in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in Richard I. Cohen, Natalie B. Dohrmann, Adam Shear, and Elchanan Reiner, eds., *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cincinnati, 2014), 85–96.

[50] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 119–33.

[51] Ibid., 128–52. For an example, see Y. Tzvi Langermann, "Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo's Engagement with Atomism: Some Further Explorations into a Knotty Problem," in Cohen *et al.*, eds., *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 124–33.

The key is recognition that science, like philosophy, for early modern Italian Jews was largely a bookish endeavour, despite occasional protests such as Abraham Portaleone's claim that most books are just repositories of outdated knowledge.[52] In fact, Portaleone's work is built on numerous classical and medieval authorities as well as newer texts.[53] Delmedigo's multiple enthusiasms were at root literary affairs.[54] Indeed, as Hava Tirosh-Samuelson suggests, what almost all the Jewish thinkers in Italy interested in science and philosophy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had in common was their understanding of such study as a "hermeneutical activity."[55] Jews in Italy read the book of nature by reading books, and thus the justification for the pursuit of natural philosophy was largely a defense of reading certain texts and reading them in a particular way. In addition to the new role of print in Jewish intellectual culture, Italian Jewish intellectuals tended to be up-to-date in their scientific knowledge as so many of them passed through the medical school at Padua or were closely connected to those who had.[56] Indeed, there were enough Jewish medical students to create a book market with multilingual dictionaries and medical texts including Hebrew.[57]

[52] See Alessandro Guetta, "Avraham Portaleone, le scientifique repenti," in Gad Freudenthal, J.-P. Rothschild, and G. Dahan, eds., *Torah et science: perspectives historiques et théoretiques* (Paris, 2001), 221–3.

[53] Gianfranco Miletto, *Glauben und Wissen im Zeitalter der Reformation* (Berlin, 2004), 267–304; Samuel S. Kottek, "Jews between Profane and Sacred Science in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Abraham Portaleone," in Helm and Winkelmann, eds., *Religious Confessions and the Sciences*, 108–18; Guetta, "Avraham Portaleone from Science to Mysticism," in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, vol. II (Leiden, 1990), 40–7; and Andrew D. Berns, *The Bible and Natural Philosophy in Renaissance Italy: Jewish and Christian Physicians in Search of Truth* (Cambridge, 2014), esp. chs. 4–5. Miletto has published an inventory of Portaleone's library, *La biblioteca di Abramo ben David Portaleone secondo l'inventario della sua eredità* (Florence, 2013); see Miletto, "Jesuit Influence on Italian Jewish Culture in the 16th and 17th Centuries," in James Bernauer and Robert A. Maryks, eds., *"The Tragic Couple": Encounters between Jews and Jesuits* (Leiden, 2014), 116 n. 29.

[54] See Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges*, 76–87.

[55] Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Theology of Nature in Sixteenth-Century Italian Jewish Philosophy," *Science in Context* 10, 4 (Winter 1997), 534.

[56] On Jewish study in Padua, see Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 100–17; for incorporation of new ideas in Italian university curricula, see Charles B. Schmitt, "Philosophy and Science in Sixteenth-Century Italian Universities," in *The Renaissance: Essays in Interpretation* (London, 1982), 297–336; Paula Findlen, "The Formation of a Scientific Community: Natural History in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in Anthony Grafton and Nancy Siraisi, eds., *Natural Particulars: Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 369–72.

[57] See James L. Fuchs and Mordecai Plaut, "Jewish Medicine and Renaissance Epistemology: Ethical and Scientific Encounters," *Koroth* 9 (1988), 218–25, esp. 221–2.

PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE IN EARLY MODERN ASHKENAZ

The place of philosophy and science in late medieval and early modern Ashkenaz has been much studied by historians in recent decades, countering an image of a Jewish subculture resistant to philosophical rationalism and uninterested in science.[58] The modern history of such an image begins with the Haskalah's critique of "Baroque" Jewish culture (of which more below) and with nineteenth-century historiography that adopted much of the Haskalah's assumptions, although some medieval sources expressed such a view.[59]

Historians continue to debate key issues. Some argue for a native Ashkenazic rationalism, while others argue that interest in science and even in philosophy did not necessarily constitute an embrace of rationalism.[60] Certainly, no matter how measured, there was less philosophical and scientific study in medieval Ashkenaz and Tsarfat (northern France) than in Spain, Provence, Italy, or the Byzantine world.[61] But some Ashkenazic rabbis did – in various contexts – engage in scientific study.[62] In early fifteenth-century Prague, for example, we can identify a group of scholars strongly interested in philosophy and astronomy.[63]

Most important for our purposes is a group of thinkers in early modern Poland and Bohemia who were deeply engaged in the study of philosophy and science. These figures included Moses Isserles, the Maharal of Prague, Mordekhai Jaffe, David Gans, Ephraim Luntshitz, and Yom Tov Lipmann

[58] The starting point of this discussion is usually seen as Ephraim Kupfer, "Concerning the Cultural Image of Ashkenazic Jewry and its Sages in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries" [Hebrew], *Tarbiẓ* 42 (1972/3), 113–47. For summaries of the historiography since then, see Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 55–68; Joseph Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller: Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* (Oxford, 2004), 5–7; Freudenthal, "Introduction," to "Schwerpunkt: Science and Philosophy in Early Modern Ashkenazic Culture: Rejection, Toleration, and Appropriation," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 8 (2009), 18–20; Reiner, "The Attitude."

[59] For examples from medieval authors, the Haskalah, and modern historians, see Freudenthal, "Introduction," 17–19.

[60] Compare Davis, *Heller*, 7; and David Berger, "Polemic, Exegesis, Philosophy and Science: On the Tenacity of Ashkenazic Modes of Thought," in Freudenthal, ed., "Schwerpunkt," 39.

[61] For a comparison of manuscript production, e.g., see Freudenthal, "Introduction," 21.

[62] See Y. Tzvi Langermann, "Was There No Science in Ashkenaz? The Ashkenazic Reception of Some Early-Medieval Hebrew Scientific Texts," in Freudenthal, ed., "Schwerpunkt," 67–92.

[63] See Tamás Visi, "The Emergence of Philosophy in Ashkenazic Contexts – The Case of Czech Lands in the Early Fifteenth Century," in Freudenthal, ed., "Schwerpunkt," 213–43.

Heller.[64] One point of contention is whether we can trace historical connections between this group and the earlier figures in Prague, but most historians see a gap from the mid fifteenth to the mid sixteenth centuries in which most prominent Ashkenazic rabbis displayed little interest in science or rationalist philosophy.[65] And the flourishing of philosophical study from Isserles to Heller seems to have also been short-lived. By the second half of the seventeenth century, interest in philosophical study had waned, setting the stage for the early eighteenth-century view that philosophy was not studied in Ashkenaz.[66]

The question was not only whether philosophy was a legitimate arena of study and how philosophy should be related to the Torah, but also which philosophical texts were to be studied and what works should be given authority and priority.[67] So the question of legitimation of philosophical study in the Ashkenazic context hinged not only on the acceptability of non-Jewish literature but also on the status of non-Ashkenazic Jewish literature.

The transmission of Sephardic and Italian texts across the Alps was crucial.[68] In some cases, we can point to specific texts that came into the Ashkenazic sphere or specific individuals with ties to northern Italy, such as Moses Isserles or Mattias Delacrut.[69] On the other hand, physicians coming to Poland and Bohemia from Spain and later Italy seemed to have played almost no role in the discussion of science in early modern Ashkenaz.[70]

There may also have been some material "native" to the area circulating in the sixteenth century. Whatever connections there were between the circles around Isserles in Poland and the "Prague school" of a century before, there was some pre-Ashkenazic Jewish study of astronomy in Slavic-speaking areas that may have reached Krakow in the sixteenth century.[71] A kind of folk philosophizing in the recitation of liturgy based

[64] See Leonard S. Levin, *Seeing with Both Eyes: Ephraim Luntshitz and the Polish-Jewish Renaissance* (Leiden, 2008), 16–47.

[65] For a summary of the different views, see Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 55–8; Levin, *Seeing with Both Eyes*, 20, 45–7.

[66] See Shear, *Kuzari*, 189–90, and the references cited there.

[67] Reiner, "The Attitude."

[68] See Jacob Elbaum, *Petiḥut ve-Histragrut: ha-Yeḥzirut ha-Ruḥanit ha-Sifrutit be-Polin uve-Arẓot Ashkenaz be-Shilhe ha-Meah Shesh Esre* (Jerusalem, 1990).

[69] Levin, *Seeing with Both Eyes*, 22–4; David Fishman, "Rabbi Moses Isserles and the Study of Science among Polish Rabbis," *Science in Context* 10 (1997), 575–6.

[70] Fishman, "Isserles," 3–5; Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 92–94.

[71] Moshe Taube, "Transmission of Scientific Texts in 15th-Century Eastern Knaan," *Aleph* 10, 2 (2010), 315–53.

on Maimonidean motifs may also have been a spur to elite rabbinic engagement.[72]

In other respects, the terms of the debate over legitimacy and authority hinged on familiar issues from other Jewish contexts. Like their counterparts elsewhere, some Ashkenazic rabbis used the idea that ancient Jews had been in possession of all knowledge and had passed that knowledge on to gentiles.[73] Others espoused a moderate Maimonideanism that understood philosophy as something to be reconciled with Jewish sources, including, for some, Kabbalah. For these circles of thinkers, philosophy was a normal part of their studies.[74]

Moses Isserles (*c.*1525–72) was the crucial figure: as a young man, he had already embraced the study of Maimonides and Aristotelianism (although the extent of his knowledge of Aristotle is not clear). He had assiduously studied the scientific and philosophical material available to him in Hebrew, emanating from the medieval Sephardic tradition and from recent Hebrew translations of astronomical texts, one of which he later wrote a commentary on.[75] In his *Torat ha-Olah* (1570), Isserles articulated his views on the place of philosophy and Kabbalah in rabbinic study, some of which he had adumbrated in an exchange with his cousin, Solomon Luria, *c.*1550, in which he defended the use of Aristotelian science.[76] Over the course of his entire career, and in his explicit writings on the subject, Isserles took a synthesizing approach toward philosophy, Kabbalah, and Halakhah.[77] Although he disclaimed the incorporation of metaphysics and thus might be called an anti-rationalist,[78] Isserles viewed the study of Aristotelian natural philosophy, Maimonidean philosophical theology, and Kabbalah as all normal parts of the tool-kit of the halakhist.[79] Isserles was certainly willing to interpret Jewish texts in light of natural philosophy – for example, seeing Aristotelian cosmology

[72] Visi, "Emergence of Philosophy," 222–7.

[73] See Melamed, "A Legitimating Myth: Ashkenazic Thinkers on the Purported Jewish Origins of Philosophy and Science," in Freudenthal, ed., "Schwerpunkt," 299–315.

[74] See Davis, *Heller*, 6–7 and nn. 12–16 there.

[75] Y. Tzvi Langermann, "The Astronomy of Rabbi Moses Isserles," in S. Unguru, ed., *Physics, Cosmology, and Astronomy, 1300–1700* (Dordrecht, 1991), 83–98; Fishman, "Isserles," 574f.

[76] For comments and partial English translations, see Levin, *Seeing with Both Eyes*, 27–9, 223–30, 237–85. See also Fishman, "Isserles," 578.

[77] Lawrence Kaplan, "Rabbi Mordekhai Jaffe and the Evolution of Jewish Culture in Poland in the Sixteenth Century," in Cooperman, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 269.

[78] Davidson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy," 119.

[79] See Kaplan, "Jaffe," 269; Fishman, "Isserles," 577–81; Jonah Ben-Sasson, *Mishnato ha-Iyunit Shel ha-Rema* (Jerusalem, 1984).

reflected in the structure of the Temple.[80] Like his Italian contemporaries, he was prepared to endorse a version of the "prisca theologia" notion that different religious traditions and different philosophical schools could all be understood as expressing different versions of a common truth – if read properly.[81] To be sure, in order for his synthesis to work, he trod cautiously and had to grapple with the implications of Aristotle's denial of creation *ex nihilo*.[82] But in this respect he was no different from the main body of Jewish intellectuals interested in philosophy in the late Middle Ages or the early modern period.

Following in the footsteps of Moshe Isserles, the study of astronomy became firmly entrenched in Ashkenazic rabbinic circles.[83] Among those who took up astronomy was David Gans (1541–1613), whose interest in that subject led him away from a solely bookish knowledge of the topic to the major centers of empirical astronomical study. Gans had contact with Tycho Brahé and Johannes Kepler in Prague and composed his own textbook of astronomy, *Neḥmad ve-Naim*.[84] Gans took pride in Jewish accomplishments, noting rabbinic traditions that seemed compatible with Brahé's views, and offered several other reasons for studying science, arguing for science as aiding in piety, as having practical astronomical value, and as a way of overcoming Jewish cultural inferiority.[85]

In his defense of Jewish engagement with science, Gans seems to reflect the views of Isserles. But he was also keenly aware of the views of his other teacher, the Maharal of Prague, who, despite his anti-rationalism, did not oppose the study of natural philosophy.[86] David Ruderman has argued that the Maharal and Isserles offered compatible viewpoints that allowed for a separate realm of scientific study while refraining from any need to endorse Aristotelian metaphysics.[87] However, Isserles's approach seems more easily to lead to synthesis and eclecticism, while the Maharal suggests

[80] Davidson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy," 132–6.
[81] For this view, see Levin, *Seeing with Both Eyes*, 36.
[82] Langermann, "The Astronomy of Rabbi Moses Isserles," 94.
[83] See Fishman, "Isserles," 581; and Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 69.
[84] On Gans, see Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 82–7; Noah J. Efron, "Irenism and Natural Philosophy in Rudolfine Prague: The Case of David Gans," *Science in Context* 10 (1997), 627–49; Andre Neher, *Jewish Thought and the Scientific Revolution: David Gans (1541–1613) and His Times* (Oxford, 1986); Mordecai Breuer, "Introduction," in his edition of Gans's *Ẓemaḥ David* (Jerusalem, 1983), 1–32.
[85] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 83–5; Efron, "Irenism."
[86] For a survey of his writings, see Byron L. Sherwin, *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent: The Life and Works of Judah Loew of Prague* (London, 1982), 38–50; Davidson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy," 118–19; Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 80–1; and Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 108–28.
[87] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 76–7, and n. 77.

a more clear-cut division between religion and "science" as autonomous fields of inquiry.

In general, the more synthetic approach of Isserles seems to have prevailed. In his commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Mordekhai Jaffe presented Maimonides as a relatively conservative, exoteric thinker who valued all midrash and who only offered allegorical interpretation that flowed from *peshat* readings of the scriptural text.[88] In his commentary on Jedaiah Bedersi's *Beḥinat Olam*, Yom Tov Lipmann Heller (1578–1654) synthesized Maimonidean philosophy and kabbalistic motifs.[89] Heller also read widely in the classics of medieval Sephardic thought as well as newer works from Italy; he was quite interested in science, especially astronomy, and seems to have filtered most of what he knew about science through the literature he was reading.[90]

Another figure close to the Maharal who seems to have taken up the approach of Isserles toward philosophy and science was Ephraim Luntshitz (*c.*1550–1619), a popular preacher.[91] Likewise, Abraham Horowitz, a student of Isserles, turned toward a classic work of Maimonidean psychology that mixed religious teaching with medical discourse, the *Eight Chapters*, which he published in 1577.[92] Indeed, if Isserles represents the mainstream Ashkenazic approach, arguably it was Solomon Luria's opposition to any reference to Aristotle's *Physics* in a halakhic discussion that was non-traditional.[93]

Others in eastern Europe evinced a more radically rationalist view. Eliezer Ashkenazi came from Italy to Poland in the 1570s, after extensive travels in the Mediterranean, and brought with him a somewhat more radically rationalistic outlook that he expressed in his biblical commentary.[94] Another Ashkenazic Jew who had studied in Italy, a German physician named Eliezer Eilburg, posed a number of difficult questions about Jewish beliefs in an unpublished work.[95] By the early seventeenth century, enough knowledge about the philosophical tradition could be found for Joseph ben Isaac Halevi, one of Heller's teachers, to write an

[88] Kaplan, "Jaffe," 271–9. [89] See Davis, *Heller*, 36–7, 54–65.

[90] See Joseph M. Davis, "Ashkenazic Rationalism and Midrashic Natural History: Responses to the New Science in the Works of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Heller (1578–1654)," *Science in Context* 10 (1997), 605–26.

[91] See Levin, *Seeing with Both Eyes*, 171–8. [92] For analysis, see ibid., 39–44.

[93] Kaplan, "Jaffe," 269–70. On Luria's views, see also Davidson, "Medieval Jewish Philosophy," 121.

[94] On Ashkenazi's thought and his activity in Poland, see Levin, *Seeing with Both Eyes*, 67–76.

[95] Joseph Davis, "The 'Ten Questions' of Eliezer Eilberg and the Problem of Jewish Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 91 (2001), 293–336.

extensive treatise on Aristotelian and Maimonidean thought, *Givat ha-More* (published in 1611).[96] But Halevi's work was controversial and perhaps demonstrates the limits of rationalism in early modern Ashkenaz.

REPONSES TO THE NEW SCIENCE

David Gans's engagement with Tycho Brahé and Johannes Kepler in Prague in 1600 may have been the most direct connection between an early modern Jew and the cauldron of new ideas that would eventually be called the "Scientific Revolution."[97] While Jewish thinkers in the Ottoman Empire, Italy, and Ashkenaz were grappling with how to legitimize the study of the natural world and the place of philosophy in Judaism, using much the same terms of discussion as their medieval predecessors, the ground of what constituted scientific knowledge and how to obtain that knowledge was shifting. The emergence of an experimental basis for science challenged the largely exegetical character of previous Jewish natural philosophy. If Jews wished to be up-to-date in science, they would need to put down their books and move from the library to the laboratory. Long-standing discussions over how Jews should respond to the Aristotelian tradition were less relevant – although principles for the incorporation of "non-Jewish" knowledge might be translated into the new context. In fact, Jewish intellectuals did not leave the books behind and enter the laboratories until the modern period. Jewish engagement with the new science played out textually – in new treatises, commentaries, sermons, and responsa: for the most part, Jews continued to read the book of nature and the book of Scripture together.[98]

Copernicanism represented as profound a challenge to traditional Jewish cosmologies as had Aristotle's denial of creation *ex nihilo* in the medieval period. And rapidly emerging new discoveries (in the New World, in the natural world) and new technologies could pose a challenge to biblical and rabbinic texts based on older sources of knowledge. All of these were also discoveries made by non-Jews, increasing the feeling of cultural inferiority among Jewish observers.

Some Jewish exponents of scientific study grappled with the new discoveries. For those who believed that the Torah encompassed all knowledge and that Jews were privileged inheritors of a tradition that had originally known

[96] See Davis, *Yom Tov Lippman Heller*, 44–50.

[97] On the involvement of Jews in scientific activity as such, see "Conclusion: Synthesis and Divergence" below.

[98] Cf. Berns, *The Bible and Natural Philosophy*, on the connections that early modern Jewish and Christian physicians made between science and biblical studies.

all the sciences, the new discoveries needed to be reconciled with rabbinic and biblical texts. Isserles, Gans, and Heller proposed new readings of talmudic sources that made them compatible with the new astronomy.[99] Some, like Azariah de' Rossi, had taken up the implicit Maimonideanism in this approach and carried it farther.[100] On the other hand, one could reject the Maimonidean approach altogether, as the Maharal did in criticizing Azariah (and implicitly Isserles), and argue that science and "Torah" simply represented different kinds of knowledge.[101]

The new science in many ways offered an opportunity for a renewed Jewish apologetic. If the medieval apologetics had tended to see Jews as teachers of Aristotle and Plato, the new apologetic argued that Jews had had knowledge of new science, and had transmitted this to non-Jews, who had gotten things confused until the latest discoveries had rediscovered the true knowledge. In the meantime, Jews had lost the original knowledge. Gans presented this as his explanation of Copernicus's ideas as ancient Jewish wisdom.[102] Avner Ben-Zaken suggests that Joseph Delmedigo's quest for old manuscripts was motivated by a hope that these would show that Jews had a lot of scientific knowledge and could still contribute to scientific discussion in the new environment of the seventeenth century.[103]

Over time, it became quite clear that to be interested in science would mean endorsing the new knowledge. One could still think of oneself as a Maimonidean but one's Maimonideanism would need to encompass a non-Aristotelian physics and cosmology.[104] The new discoveries were taken up (enthusiastically) by some thinkers, causing them to reinterpret existing biblical texts, as in the case of Portaleone's *Shilte ha-Gibborim.* Or the new scientific discoveries could be described and endorsed as worthwhile areas of study, as in Gans's *Neḥmad ve-Naim* or Joseph Delmedigo's *Sefer Elim.*[105]

In the area of Jewish law, the new science posed additional challenges. Some rabbis tried to reconcile rabbinic discussions with new science or to use the new science to respond (perhaps a bit belatedly) to radical Aristotelianism.[106] But not all of these scientifically inclined rabbis agreed on whether such new (or newly regained) knowledge could be applied to

[99] See Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 76; Davis, "Ashkenazic Rationalism," 617; Efron, "Irenism," 629; Melamed, "A Legitimating Myth," 300, 306–12.

[100] On this, see Melamed, "A Legitimating Myth," 300; Fishman, "Isserles," 30; Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 80.

[101] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 80–2.

[102] Melamed, "A Legitimating Myth," 306–7.

[103] Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges*, 80–91.

[104] For an exception, see Daniel Lasker, "Eastern European Karaite Attitudes Toward Modern Science," *Aleph* 10 (2010), 119–36.

[105] For reception of this approach, see Davis, "Ashkenazic Rationalism," 610f.

[106] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 260–6.

halakhic discourse. Heller seemed willing to do so while Isserles and Jaffe (and certainly the Maharal) would not.[107] In Italy, Isaac Lampronti was willing to overturn long-standing halakhic practice, based on new scientific knowledge; Judah Briel was not.[108] On the other hand, Lampronti also struggled with cases where rabbinic texts could not be easily reconciled with science, ultimately deferring to the rabbinic texts.[109]

Indeed, it would seem that, as the new science offered more difficult challenges to the simple readings of biblical or rabbinic sources, the challenges for the enthusiasts of the new science became greater. The case of Copernican heliocentricity is the most clear of these issues and most early modern rabbis, from Gans to Lampronti, hedged, falling back on the "compromise" position of Tycho Brahé as compatible with Judaism.[110] When the even more revolutionary ideas of Newton, Leibniz, and Boyle came to the fore at the end of the seventeenth century and were popularized in the eighteenth century, arguably the challenges became even greater. Moreover, the development of empiricist philosophy in the seventeenth century could be seen as issuing a challenge to all revealed tradition.

One response to these developments was to argue for the separate spheres of science and religion and to suggest that science and philosophy had no role in Jewish life. But for those who were interested in science, this was not an option. And for those rabbis serving Jewish communities in Italy or the Western Sephardic Diaspora with a large number of men with secular educations who were aware of the new philosophical and scientific currents, a more robust response was needed.

In many ways, these new challenges served to revivify a strain of anti-rationalism in Jewish thought. As in the general history of early modern skepticism, some rabbis argued for a basic compatibility of science and religion but argued that where they could not be reconciled, God-given texts had to be trusted over man-made ideas.[111] The conservative Maimonidean or synthesizing approach – developed in the late Middle Ages and continued by Sephardic, Italian, and some Ashkenazic thinkers in the sixteenth century – had great appeal in this new environment.

THE HASKALAH AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Perhaps the clearest example of such a response to the new science could be found in the engagement with science and philosophy in the cultural

[107] Davis, "Ashkenazic Rationalism," 612–13. [108] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 260–1.
[109] Ibid., 268f. [110] Ibid., 239–40, 266.
[111] For a case study, see ibid., ch. 11. For background: Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen, 1960).

agenda of the early Haskalah.[112] In addition to arguing that Ashkenazic Jews should take up the study of the sciences, early *maskilim* turned directly to the medieval philosophical tradition. For some, like Israel of Zamosc (*c*.1700–72), the primary way of engaging with scientific and philosophical ideas was through exegesis of medieval philosophical texts and the Talmud, although he also authored an unpublished treatise on astronomy.[113] Zamosc continued many of the familiar patterns in justifying the study of science as he grappled with new scientific texts: claiming Jews as the originators of the new science, and seeing the new science as affirming the superiority of rabbinic tradition.[114]

Aaron Salomon Gumpertz (1723–69), a student of Zamosc who became a university-trained physician, also promoted the study of science among Jews. He was joined by various *maskilim* who wrote works spreading new scientific ideas in Hebrew, including in works intended for young readers.[115] Going even further than Zamosc or Gumpertz in the promotion of the new science, especially the new experimental philosophy, was Mordecai Gumpel Schnaber (Georg) Levison, a Jew from Berlin who made a career as a physician in Britain and Sweden.[116] Levison composed an unpublished work in Hebrew intended to introduce the new science to the same target audience as the Berlin *maskilim*, as well as a commentary to Maimonides's Thirteen Principles of Faith that used this text as a vehicle

[112] See Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2004), ch. 2; Adam Shear, "Jewish Enlightenment beyond Western Europe," in Martin Kavka, Zachary Braiterman, and David Novak, eds., *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: The Modern Era* (Cambridge, 2012), 252–79.

[113] See Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 332–3; Shear, *Kuzari*, 215–22; Freudenthal, "Jewish Traditionalism and Early Modern Science: Rabbi Israel Zamosc's Dialectic of Enlightenment" (Berlin, 1744), in Robert S. Westman and David Biale, eds., *Thinking Impossibilities: The Intellectual Legacy of Amos Funkenstein* (Toronto, 2008), 63–96; Freudenthal, "The Subversive Role of Science in R. Israel Zamosc's Talmudic Novellae" [Hebrew], in Howard Kreisel, ed., *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought* (Beersheva, 2006), II, 223–35.

[114] See Melamed, "A Legitimating Myth," 309–10.

[115] See Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 334–5; Gad Freudenthal, "New Light on the Physician Aaron Salomon Gumpertz: Medicine, Science, and Early Haskalah in Berlin," *Zutot* (2003), 66–77; Thomas Kollatz, "Under the Cover of Tradition: Old and New Science in the Works of Aron Salomon Gumperz," in Resianne Fontaine, Andrea Schatz, and Irene Zwiep, eds., *Sepharad in Ashkenaz: Medieval Knowledge and Eighteenth-Century Enlightened Jewish Discourse* (Amsterdam, 2007), 147–56; Tal Kogman, "Intercultural Contacts in Maskilic Texts about Sciences" [Hebrew], in Shmuel Feiner and Israel Bartal, eds., *He-Haskalah le-Gevane'ah* (Jerusalem, 2005), 29–42; Tal Kogman, *Ha-Maskilim be-Mada'im: Ḥinukh Yehudei le-Mada'im bi-Merḥav Dover ha-Germanit be-Et ha-Ḥadasha* (Jerusalem, 2013).

[116] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, ch. 11.

for grappling with the problem of reconciling revealed religion and rational science.

A survey of eighteenth-century commentaries and discussion of Jewish philosophy suggests that the synthesizing view, with an anti-rationalist or fideistic backbone, dominated maskilic discourse.[117] Very few Jewish thinkers in the eighteenth century embraced radically rationalist views. This shared paradigm seems to have allowed the early *maskilim* and traditional rabbis like the Gaon of Vilna or Barukh of Shklov to share interests in the study of philosophy before the end of the eighteenth century when the Haskalah's cultural agenda became anathema to traditionalists.[118]

However, the new scientific and epistemological paradigms placed considerable pressure on the old synthetic model. In some cases, the answer was a more conservative turn, somewhat abandoning the new science and taking a more stridently anti-rationalist position.[119] Many in the nineteenth century who wanted to engage in scientific activity went in a different direction and would entirely separate science from Jewish religious thought.

Such a move toward a "secularizing" of science was already anticipated in early modern circles among some physicians.[120] Jewish physicians frequently had to defend themselves and their professional privileges against anti-Jewish sentiments, turning toward apologetics.[121] And Jews with medical training, such as Padua graduate Tobias Cohen, played a large role in the dissemination of scientific and philosophical ideas in the

[117] See Shear, "Jewish Enlightenment."

[118] See Feiner, *Jewish Enlightenment*, pt. 2 "Jewish Kulturkampf"; Immanel Etkes, *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and His Image* (Berkeley, 2002), 37–72; David Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov* (New York, 1995); Mejeris Šubas, "The Gaon's Views on Philosophy and Science," in I. Lampertas and L. Lampertienė, eds., *The Gaon of Vilnius and the Annals of Jewish Culture* (Vilnius, 1997), 65–74; Alan Brill, "Auxiliary to Ḥokhmah: the Writings of the Vilna Gaon and Philosophical Terminology," in Moshe Hallamish, Yosef Rivlin, and Raphael Shuchat, eds., *Ha-Gra Uveit-Midrasho* (Ramat Gan, 2003), 9–38.

[119] Freudenthal, "Jewish Traditionalism."

[120] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, ch. 10.

[121] For examples, see Benjamin Ravid, "In Defense of the Jewish Doctors of Venice, ca. 1670," in M. Perani, ed., *Una Manna Bonna per Mantova* (Florence, 2004), 479–94; Joseph Levi, "Paracelsians versus Antiparacelsians: German Doctors against Jewish Physicians in Frankfurt am Main, 1618–1645," in Heinz Schott and Ilana Zinguer, eds., *Paracelsus und seine internationale Rezeption in der frühen Neuzeit* (Leiden, 1998), 110–30. For an example of the way in which anti-Jewish sentiments could be displayed in medical discussions mixed up with interest in Jewish magic and "cabala," see Nancy G. Siraisi's description of the sixteenth-century German court physician Johann Lange, in *Communities of Learned Experience: Epistolary Medicine in the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 2013), 56–60.

Jewish community.[122] But medical training was a largely secular affair, and as more Jews gained admission to universities in the eighteenth century or were able to obtain scientific knowledge outside traditional Hebrew sources, the need to reconcile science with Judaism could abate. Jacob de Castro Sarmento, a Sephardic physician in London, adopted deism and left the Jewish community in the middle of the eighteenth century.[123] For David Ruderman, this "dramatically adumbrated the wave of defections from traditional Judaism in years to come."[124] It is also a good example of another way in which the typical early modern patterns of reconciliation and synthesis would no longer hold.

VERNACULARIZATION AND POPULARIZATION

As intellectuals grappled with the new science, how did the large majority of Jewish society who were not scholars respond to philosophical study? Did new ideas enter their consciousness? How did they understand the natural world? One of the key cultural developments in early modern European Jewish society was the development of a large vernacular literature aimed at a broader reading public, including women. Did the textual traditions discussed here enter into that vernacular reading material?[125]

Indeed, the rise of print meant a greater availability of scientific knowledge for the general public, in the form of printed works on the calendar and astronomy. Works that offered guidance on healing, on intimate relations, and on bodily functions were also popular. Older works like Naḥmanides's *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*, something of a sex and lifestyle manual that offered guidance according to Kabbalah, circulated in multiple editions in Hebrew and one in Yiddish.[126] Others were newer texts that contained religious guidance in addition to scientific or medical descriptions.[127] Some Yiddish books offered descriptions of symptoms and advice

[122] See Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 229–325.

[123] See Matt Goldish, "Newtonian, *Converso*, and Deist: The Lives of Jacob (Henrique) de Castro Sarmento," *Science in Context* 10 (1997), 651–75.

[124] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 331.

[125] For the larger context, see Stephen Pumfrey, Paolo L. Rossi, and Maurice Slawinski, eds., *Science, Culture, and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe* (Manchester, 1991).

[126] Michael Stanislawski, "Toward the Popular Religion of Ashkenazic Jews: Yiddish–Hebrew Texts on Sex and Circumcision," in Lauren Strauss and Michael Brenner, eds., *Mediating Modernity: Challenges and Trends in the Jewish Encounter with the Modern World* (Detroit, 2008), 96–100.

[127] Stanislawski, "Popular Religion," 100–3; Roni Weinstein, *Juvenile Sexuality, Kabbalah, and Catholic Reformation in Italy* (Leiden, 2009).

on the scheduling of treatment according to astrological concepts of "ill-fated" days.[128] These texts offered some access to the medical knowledge of physicians (and were usually written by physicians) in a popular and accessible way. The popularization of these works as well as autobiographical writing also suggests the rise of a new consciousness about human bodies that seems to reflect new kabbalistic ideas as well as a more general interest in the body in early modern Europe.[129] And the absorption of kabbalistic ideas into Jewish popular consciousness may have also brought with it the absorption of some new scientific ideas.[130]

Medical practitioners treating Jewish patients across early modern Europe and the Mediterranean were a varied lot, ranging from university-educated physicians with up-to-date scientific knowledge to healers who relied mainly on folk remedies or magical practices. In theory, these groups were distinguishable according to education and background, but in practice, boundaries could blur. Physicians often criticized women who served as folk healers but were more mixed in their views of magical healers (*ba'ale shem*).[131] Tobias Cohen's *Ma'ase Tuvyah*, the most extensive discussion of medicine in Hebrew in the period and reprinted often in the eighteenth century, was a learned compendium of medicine by a university-trained physician, and was critical of popular healers.[132] At the same time, its wide dissemination suggests a potentially wider, "middlebrow" audience that went beyond Jewish medical students who wanted to read Latin alongside Hebrew. Indeed, despite some vernacularization, Hebrew remained the major language for scientific, medical, and philosophical texts aimed at any kind of Jewish audience, with the exception of ethical literature.[133] There appears to have been an increase in scientific material available in Yiddish in the

[128] Jean Baumgarten, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature* (Oxford, 2005), 341–59.

[129] See Maria Diemling and Giuseppe Veltri, eds. *The Jewish Body: Corporeality, Society, and Identity in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period* (Leiden, 2009), especially Weinstein, "The Rise of the Body in Early Modern Jewish Society: The Italian Case Study," 16–20, and Diemling, "'Den ikh bin treyfe gevezn': Body Perception in Seventeenth-Century Jewish Autobiographical Texts," 93–125.

[130] See J. H. Chajes, "Kabbalah and the Diagrammatic Phase of the Scientific Revolution," in Cohen *et al.*, eds., *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 109–23.

[131] See Nimrod Zinger, "'Who Knows What the Cause is?': 'Natural' and 'Unnatural' Causes for Illness in the Writings of Ba'alei Shem, Doctors and Patients among German Jews in the Eighteenth Century," in Diemling and Veltri, eds., *The Jewish Body*, 127–55.

[132] See Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 229–55.

[133] More study of the way that medieval philosophical ideas migrate from Hebrew into Yiddish ethical literature is needed. For some examples, see Baumgarten, *Old Yiddish Literature*, 207–59. For relatively rare cases of vernacularization, see Gutwirth, "Language and Medicine"; Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges*, 23.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as a few works published in Ladino in the same period, although the absolute numbers remain small.[134] Broader dissemination of up-to-date scientific information in Hebrew, Judeo-German, and German began in the last decades of the eighteenth century under the auspices of the Haskalah movement.[135]

A different kind of vernacularization may have taken place through sermons. Sermons were certainly a place for dissemination of philosophical ideas to a wider audience (sometimes controversially) and they could also be used for disseminating new scientific knowledge as well.[136] Here the historian faces a methodological problem, however, as most of our access to these sermons is through later edited Hebrew versions. Much remains to be done in understanding the relationship between the study of science and philosophy and broader cultural change in early modern Jewish communities.

CONCLUSION: FROM SYNTHESIS TO DIVERGENCE

With relatively few exceptions, such as Leone Ebreo, Baruch Spinoza, Moses Mendelssohn, and Solomon Maimon, Jews did not contribute directly to the development of areas of early modern philosophy beyond natural philosophy.[137] The influence of Jews was often textual: the use of Maimonides and other medieval Jewish thinkers by early modern philosophers appears significant.[138] Some interplay between

[134] Lapon-Kandelshein and Baruchson-Arbib, "Hebrew Scientific Publications," 186, table 5. See also Baumgarten, *Old Yiddish Literature*.

[135] For extensive discussion of these texts, see Kogman, *Ha-Maskilim*.

[136] See Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching, 1200–1800: An Anthology* (New Haven, 1989); the essays in Ruderman, ed., *Preachers of the Italian Ghetto; Judah Moscato Sermons, Edition and Translation, Volume One*, ed. Gianfranco Miletto, Giuseppe Veltri *et al.* (Leiden, 2011). For a case study of the transmission of science, see Ruderman on Azariah Figo, in *Jewish Thought*, 198–212.

[137] Jewish physicians did contribute to contemporary medical discussion in the early modern period: see, for an example, Siraisi, *Communities*, 133 n. 85.

[138] Herbert Davidson, *Moses Maimonides* (Oxford, 2005), 289, 427–8; Georges Tamer, ed., *The Trias of Maimonides / Die Trias des Maimonides* (Berlin, 2005); Aaron Katchen, *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis* (Cambridge, MA, 1984); Stephen Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies* (Leiden, 1996); Shear, *Kuzari*, 193–207; Mauro Zonta, "The Influence of Hasdai Crescas's Philosophy on some Aspects of Sixteenth-century Philosophy and Science," in Jürgen Helm and Annette Winkelmann, eds., *Religious Confessions and Sciences in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden, 2001), 71–8; Sina Rauschenbach, *Josef Albo (um 1380–1444): Jüdische Philosophie und christliche Kontroverstheologie in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Leiden, 2002); Matt Goldish, *Judaism in the Theology of Sir Isaac Newton* (Dordrecht, 1998).

Kabbalah and modern philosophical and scientific thought can also be identified.[139]

Early modern "Jewish philosophy" as an internal discussion largely continued the integration of philosophy into Judaism that had begun in the late medieval period as a kind of moderate Maimonideanism. As a result of new developments in science and philosophy, however, as well as the popularization of a mythical theosophical approach to Kabbalah, the synthetic approach seems to have come under considerable pressure by 1800. By the second half of the nineteenth century, reconciliation was still being attempted by many thinkers, but a more self-conscious division had emerged between modernists who wanted to reinterpret Judaism in light of new philosophical currents and traditionalists who advocated a revived anti-philosophical position.[140]

Another divergence emerged between two spheres of activity that were largely interconnected in the early modern period: Jewish pursuit of science and Jewish religious study. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jews increasingly gained access to universities and pursued what had been "natural philosophy" in a secular setting. Many of those Jews remained connected to the Jewish community and religiously observant, but by and large scientific study became marked as a separate sphere of activity from Jewish religious practice or Jewish communal affairs, despite some discussions connecting Jewish society and public health.[141]

As in wider areas of philosophy, Jewish impact on scientific research in the early modern period was largely textual.[142] While Gans had some connections to Brahé and Kepler, neither he nor any other early modern Jews seems to have contributed significantly to new scientific research. In the eighteenth century, we can point to a few figures like Castro Sarmento in England. But with no early modern Gersonides or Einstein, the significant involvement of Jews in institutionalized scientific research

[139] See Allison Coudert, *The Impact of Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury von Helmont, 1614–1698* (Leiden, 1999); Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah* (Dordrecht, 1995). For a recent view of the interplay between kabbalistic texts and the Scientific Revolution from a different perspective, see Chajes, "Kabbalah and the Diagrammatic."

[140] Shear, *Kuzari*, 293–313.

[141] Efron, *Judaism and Science*, chs. 5–6; Mitchell B. Hart, *The Healthy Jew: The Symbiosis of Judaism and Modern Medicine* (Cambridge, 2007).

[142] For discussion, see Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 12–13, 37–371; Zonta, "Influence of Crescas"; Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges*, 62–75; Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*; Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy in Jewish Garb*, ch. 6 (co-authored with Miletto).

beginning in the nineteenth century represents a new departure in both the history of science and Jewish history.[143]

A divergence also began to emerge between Jewish philosophy and Jewish philosophers: Jews who have made careers in academic philosophy since the late nineteenth century have generally pursued professional philosophy in secularized settings. Some academic philosophers of Jewish background have also pursued Jewish religious thought, but the study of "Jewish philosophy" also changed significantly in the modern period, as a gap between histories of Jewish philosophy and normative statements emerged. A recent proposal to (re)combine academic Jewish philosophy and engagement with current scientific thought can be seen as something of a return to the project of synthesizing the "book of nature" with the "book of Scripture," a project that a few traditionalist Jews continued into modernity.[144] In the period 1500–1815, however, such an endeavor and the difficulties entailed were central to Jewish intellectual culture in a way that clearly marks the early modern as distinct from the modern.

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[143] See comments of Kogman, *Ha-Maskilim*, 1–3, and the references cited there; and Noah J. Efron, *A Chosen Calling: Jews in Science in the Twentieth Century* (Baltimore, 2014).

[144] Norbert Samuelson, *Jewish Faith and Modern Science: On the Death and Rebirth of Jewish Philosophy* (Lanham, MD, 2009).

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CHAPTER 20

PORT JEWS REVISITED

Commerce and Culture in the Age of European Expansion

LOIS C. DUBIN

INTRODUCTION
WHENCE AND WHY THE IDEA OF PORT JEWS?

Port Jews were Jewish merchants of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries who lived in the dynamic and rapidly growing port cities of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic seaboard – in cities such as Livorno, Trieste, Antwerp, Amsterdam, London, and Bordeaux – and were engaged in international maritime commerce at the time of Europe's commercial and overseas expansion. In the 1990s, historians introduced the term "Port Jews"to highlight the distinctive role and experience of these Jewish merchants: they were valued, along with other merchants, in pragmatic, utilitarian terms as useful agents and facilitators of international maritime trade; moreover, in these mercantile milieus, Jews often displayed gradual, non-ideologically charged modes of cultural adaptation and benefited from relatively favorable civil-legal standing. Acculturation and improved legal status are often taken as markers of Jewish modernity. Thus, the purpose of introducing the concept "Port Jews" was to explore the interrelations between commerce, culture, and politics in the worlds of these primarily Sephardic and Italian Jewish merchants, and to signal their activities and mentalities as marking a distinctive and important, though hitherto relatively neglected, route toward Jewish integration in modern Europe.

This category focuses not only on the economic function of port Jews but also on the site of their activity, port cities, hence, on port Jews both as international merchants and as city-dwellers oriented toward the sea and distant places. The rapid growth of Atlantic ports as "specialist urban communities" was fundamental to European economic success. These cities were characterized by increasingly diverse ethnic and religious populations, such that "[e]thnic diversity was one of the most distinctive features of dynamic European cities in the early modern era."[1] The story

[1] Peter Clark, *European Cities and Towns 400–2000* (Oxford, 2009), 7, 162.

of port Jews is thus integral to the history of both commerce and cities in early modern Europe.

The concept of port Jews served to address Jewish commerce and its links to culture and politics through the contextualized study of a particular kind of Jewish merchant in a specific milieu. Port cities, maritime commerce, legal status, and acculturation were salient in the first discussions of port Jews. Subsequently, exploration of the broader settings, cultures, and interrelations of Jews in early modern and modern port cities has proven fruitful. In later discussions, relations and networks came increasingly to the fore, including such topics as: mercantile communities, as well as individual merchants; the webs of interconnection among merchants themselves; trading networks and trading diasporas; and the Jewish Atlantic as a bridge linking European and American Jewish histories. Indeed, a focus on port cities, maritime commerce, and migration is one of several new ways by which scholars now address the material and spatial dimensions of Jewish history.[2] This focus also allows for conceptualizing regions in Jewish history less in terms of land or nation and more through oceanic, transnational, and, ultimately, global perspectives.

The idea of port Jews reflected the fact and awareness of rapid and intense globalization in the 1990s. Yet it also arose at a particular moment in Jewish historiography: the decline of the regnant nationalist schools of thought that emanated from east-central Europe and Israel, associated particularly with the historians Jacob Katz and Shmuel Ettinger. Their Germano- and Russocentric visions focused on the breakdown of supposedly cohesive Ashkenazic "traditional Jewish society" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, caused by the actions of centralizing states or enlightened Jewish ideologues striving to bring Jews "out of the ghetto" or "out of the shtetl." They stressed the struggles between those seeking to preserve the integrity of Jewish society and culture and those responding to the allure of the bright new world of European culture and politics. Thus, overall, they depicted an abrupt eruption of modernity within Jewish society or a wrenching passage to modernity, either one marked by discontinuity,

[2] See, for example, Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Vered Shemtov, eds., *Jewish Social Studies* (n.s.) 11, 3 (2005), special issue on "Jewish Conceptions and Practices of Space"; Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke, eds., *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place* (Aldershot, 2008); Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, "Review Essay: The New Spatial Turn in Jewish Studies," *AJS Review* 33, 1 (2009), 155–64.

rupture, and crisis. The idea of port Jews was one of the avenues through which dissatisfaction with these models was expressed.[3]

Like a number of other trends, the concept of port Jews reinvigorated themes previously voiced by Salo Baron.[4] Baron had long ago highlighted the decisive transformations that occurred in early modern western Europe and the Atlantic seaboard, namely, overseas commerce, mercantile capitalism, colonial expansion, and individualism. He situated Jews squarely within those processes by focusing on the resettlement of Jews in western Europe and the foundation of new communities precisely in the centers of international maritime commerce. He went on to consider whether the beginnings of modern Jewish history ought to be discerned in Jewish involvement with those processes and their ramifications, though it took a long time for the results to become prevalent among the Jewish population at large. In bypassing the usual suspects for the beginning of modern Jewish history – namely, the familiar eighteenth-century ruptures of Enlightenment and Emancipation – and in turning instead to the mid seventeenth century, Baron posed the fundamental question of the relation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – indeed, of the early modern period broadly speaking – to subsequent modern Jewish history. Did early modern Jewish history contain adumbrations or harbingers of the economic diversification, acculturation, and improved civil-legal standing generally deemed characteristic of Jewish modernity? Did the early modern period show a more gradual and less ideologically charged path of socioeconomic, cultural, and political integration of Jews within modern Europe? Might there be significant lines of continuity between the earlier and later phenomena?[5]

Baron's approach to the early modern period thus drew attention to the economic and social dimensions of Jewish life, to new settlements in

[3] Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), and Shmuel Ettinger, "The Modern Period," in Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), 727–1096. On dissatisfaction, see, for example, Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Cambridge, 1992), and Todd M. Endelman, "The Legitimation of the Diaspora Experience in Recent Jewish Historiography," *Modern Judaism* 11, 2 (1991), 195–209.

[4] Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 1st edn., 3 vols. (New York, 1937), II, 164–212; 2nd edn., 18 vols. (New York, 1952–83), IX, v–x, "Preface" to Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion (1200–1650), vols. IX–XVIII; and "Modern Capitalism and Jewish Fate," *The Menorah Journal* 30 (1942), 116–38, repr. in Baron, *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia, 1964), 43–64.

[5] Such questions were raised anew in Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (Oxford, 1985; rev. 2nd edn., 1989; rev. 3rd edn., 1997), and David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010), 191–226.

dynamic centers of overseas commerce, to a seemingly unselfconscious cultural and social adaptation of Jews within such surroundings, and to the gradual acquisition by Jews of important civil and economic rights and a status approaching that of gentile subjects in many respects. Baron initially referred to the effects of humanism, individualism, and gradual secularization on Jewish culture in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy and Holland as the "Italian and Dutch Haskalah." These, he claimed, "anticipated," "adumbrated," "revealed all the fundamentals," and "laid solid foundations" for the later Jewish enlightenment in central and eastern Europe.[6] In later discussions, he generally eschewed the term "Haskalah" for Italy and Holland, but he still highlighted Jewish–Christian social and intellectual exchange, the continuity of the "new Jewish creativity," and the "new beginning in Jewish history" marked by Dutch Jewry and the "foundations" it laid for future integration and emancipation.[7] Thus, throughout his oeuvre, his purview of Jewish Enlightenment and Emancipation was broad and his approach gradualist. Consistently downplaying ideology and legal pronouncements not anchored in social realities, he emphasized tangible phenomena and behavior that characterized and strengthened diasporic Jewish life over the longue durée.

In effect, as the proponents of the concept of port Jews turned away from the Germanocentric and eastern European paradigms, they sounded many notes of these Baronian themes and contributed to a "Baronian moment" in Jewish historiography.[8] In addition, they drew upon two other late twentieth-century Jewish historiographical trends. The first was the turn to social history by scholars such as Todd Endelman, Paula Hyman, and Steven Lowenstein. With greater interpretive sophistication, they in some ways revived the concerns of Azriel Shohet. In contrast to Jacob Katz who considered ideological justification necessary for truly

[6] Baron, *Social and Religious History*, 1st edn., II, 205–12, 216; and III, 139–41.

[7] Baron, *Social and Religious History*, 2nd edn., XIII (1969) 159–60, 192–4, 199–200, 204–5, 390 n. 2; XIV (1969), 142; XV (1973), 70–1. In *Early Modern Jewry*, 196–7, Ruderman suggests that Baron had second thoughts about this formulation. In fact, Baron did refer to "the Italian, Dutch, and Berlin Haskalah" in the Preface to the 2nd edn., IX (1965), vii, but he did not repeat the formulation in the relevant vols. XIII–XV (1969–73). For subsequent discussions of Baron's notion, see Isaac E. Barzilay, "The Italian and Berlin Haskalah (Parallels and Differences)," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 29 (1960/1), 17–54, and now Adam Shear, "'The Italian and Berlin Haskalah' – Isaac Barzilay Revisited," in Shmuel Feiner and David B. Ruderman, eds., *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007), special issue on "Early Modern Culture and Haskalah – Reconsidering the Borderlines of Modern Jewish History," 49–66.

[8] For a critical appraisal, see David Engel, "Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobaronianism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History," *Jewish History* 20 (2006), 243–64.

significant cultural and social change, Shohet had offered disparate examples of changes in eighteenth-century economic, social, and cultural behavior that appeared to proceed independently of ideology.[9]

The second recent trend of obvious salience for port Jews was the rapid growth of Sephardic studies, particularly Sephardic history. Research on the early modern Sephardic world and its various subworlds was spurred by the wide-ranging work of Jonathan Israel and Yosef Kaplan. Israel, in the first edition (1985) of *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750*, called for a general re-evaluation of the early modern period in European Jewish history, for he saw it characterized by significant new opportunities for Jewish settlement, economic activity, and integration, yet by less corrosive effects on Jewish identity and cohesion than the later Emancipation. As he limned the contours of Jewish settlement and economic life throughout Europe, he revealed important links between apparently separate Sephardic and Ashkenazic economic activities. Then, with a wide-angle lens in *Diasporas Within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)*, Israel focused on the crucial roles of the Sephardic trading diaspora throughout the European colonial empires.[10] Kaplan, in his many studies, and notably *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Dispersion in Western Europe*, subtly portrayed the complexities of Sephardic cultural, social, and religious life.[11]

The port Jew concept bespoke many of the concerns of these recent trends. It helped to provide a means to examine Jewish commerce embedded in specific, concrete, circumstances without being reductionist

[9] Azriel Shohet, *Im Ḥilufei Tekufot: Reshit ha-Haskalah be-Yahadut Germanyah* (Jerusalem, 1960); Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*, 34–6; Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia, 1979); Paula Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1991); Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770–1830* (New York, 1994). Shohet's legacy was re-examined at a conference held at Haifa University in March 2005: "Society, Culture and Ideology in the Study of Eighteenth-Century European Jews: A Conference in Memory of Prof. Azriel Shohet." See Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia, 2010), for a renewed cultural analysis of behavioral change.

[10] Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism,* and *Diasporas Within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden, 2002).

[11] Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden, 2000), and *From New Christians to New Jews* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2003). See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York, 1971), 44, on Marrano emigrants as "the first modern Jews."

or strictly materialist.[12] The goal was to analyze the function of commerce as a non-ideological vector of change in modern Jewish history and to discern its interconnections with culture and politics. Additionally, its proponents sought to draw attention to the early modern period itself as a discrete period, separate from both the late medieval and the modern (usually seen to start in the mid to late eighteenth century), and then to trace lines of continuity from the early modern to the modern. Of course, this volume itself testifies to the now widespread recognition of the early modern as a distinct period in Jewish history.[13] Further, consideration of port Jews meant highlighting the role of Sephardim, and especially Sephardic merchants, in the inception of Jewish modernity. It also meant defining the contours of Jewish mercantile cultures and exploring their practices and mentalities. Moreover, it meant charting the development of pragmatic toleration of Jews, along with others of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds, in early modern Europe and the Americas.

Thus, the developers of the port Jew concept sought to reinvigorate some older but neglected themes and to suggest new lines of inquiry for Jewish historiography. The purpose was to supplement and enrich existing perspectives, not to provide an exclusive or all-encompassing theory of the inception of modern Jewish culture and politics. For example, the idea of port Jews was not envisaged in and of itself as an alternative definition of the Enlightenment or Haskalah. Fundamentally, the idea of port Jews posed an inherently comparative approach to Jewish life in the diaspora, as well as a gradualist approach to Jewish steps toward modernity. This chapter will review the initial conceptions of port Jews presented respectively by Lois Dubin and David Sorkin in the 1990s, discuss subsequent elaborations and criticisms, and, finally, restate the continuing contribution of the idea of port Jews to Jewish scholarship.

[12] See Todd Endelman on Baron's insistence "on the embeddedness of western Jews in the material world in which they lived and their inability to remain untouched by the forces that were transforming European ways of behaving and believing," in "Secularization and the Origins of Jewish Modernity – On the Impact of Urbanization and Social Transformation," in Feiner and Ruderman, eds., "Early Modern Culture and Haskalah," 155–68, esp. 167–8. For other recent approaches to Jews and commerce, see the many works discussed by Jonathan Karp in "An 'Economic Turn' in Jewish Studies?" *AJS Perspectives* (Fall 2009), 8–10, including his own *The Politics of Jewish Commerce: Economic Thought and Emancipation in Europe, 1638–1848* (Cambridge, 2008), and Derek Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley, 2001).

[13] See the collaborative Early Modern Workshop – Jewish History Resources, held annually since 2004, at http://www.earlymodern.org/workshops.

EARLY FORMULATIONS
WHO AND WHAT WERE PORT JEWS?

I coined the term "Port Jews" in the 1990s while working on my book on the Jewish community in the Adriatic port city of Trieste. The idea was then further developed in ongoing conversations between David Sorkin and myself. In print, he referred to the newly coined term in two essays in 1997. In 1999 publications, we both elaborated on the phenomenon: Sorkin in his seminal article "The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type," and I in my monograph: Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture*.[14]

How did I derive the idea of port Jews from eighteenth-century Trieste? From the 1720s, Habsburg rulers decided to develop Trieste as a free port in order to enhance the Monarchy's role in Mediterranean and overseas commerce as well as European power politics. This effort spawned an exceptional policy of religious diversity: from the first days of the free port, merchants of "any religion, condition and nation" were invited to settle.[15] Perceived to possess uncommon commercial aptitude and experience and to be of particular utility, both Jews and Greek Orthodox Christians became major elements of Trieste's mercantile class. Pragmatic impulses of mercantilist *raison d'état* even overrode the notoriously deep anti-Jewish views of Maria Theresa, to the extent that she granted Jews favorable civil-legal standing both as individuals and as a community in Trieste in the 1770s.

The active role played by Jews in the commercial affairs of the city was signified by their holding seats on the Mercantile Exchange (Borsa) from its inception in the 1750s. Their daily spoken and written language was Italian. Government officials deemed them useful and acculturated. In 1786, one official opined that the "customs" and "morality" of the non-Catholic were the "same" as those of "the others," and "this brotherly sharing of knowledge, of customs, and of reciprocally useful needs has rendered the City not only tolerant, but friendly"; to meet the needs of the city's diverse population, the government published an almanac replete with "useful and pleasing notices for Roman Catholics, Lutherans,

[14] David Sorkin, "Enlightenment and Emancipation: German Jewry's Formative Age in Comparative Perspective," in Todd M. Endelman, ed., *Comparing Jewish Societies* (Ann Arbor, 1997), 89–112, esp. 104–5, and "Into the Modern World," in Nicholas De Lange, ed., *The Illustrated History of the Jewish People* (New York, 1997), 198–253, esp. 201–9; David Sorkin, "The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50, 1 (1999), 87–97; Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, 1999), esp. 1–94, 198–202.

[15] Dubin, *Port Jews*, 10–16.

Calvinists, non-Uniate Greeks, Jews, Turks."[16] The Jews of Trieste came to enjoy a wide range of economic and civil rights, a status on a par with that of other non-Catholic merchants, though not entirely the same as that of Catholic merchants. The Governor of Trieste wrote to Vienna in 1781 that Jews in Trieste enjoyed "almost all the privileges and equalities with the rest of the people."[17] Thus, the exceptional policy of religious diversity in the free port resulted in an exceptional status for Triestine Jews in the Habsburg realm and a favorable one in Europe overall.

I coined two new terms – "port Jews" and "civil inclusion" – to describe the activities and legal status of these Jewish merchants of Trieste. Though the eighteenth-century currents of reforming absolutism and Enlightenment were at work in the development of this free port, I contended that the fundamental dynamic was similar to the mercantilist *raison d'état* of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Jews and crypto-Jews, often called "men of the [Portuguese] nation," were valued as captains of international trade and admitted, sometimes invited, to develop the commercial potential of particular port cities, such as Livorno, Amsterdam, Bordeaux, Glückstadt, Hamburg, and London. Governing officials in mid-eighteenth-century Trieste were well aware that Trieste was not unique: they considered Livorno a prime model to be emulated as they sought "to order affairs according to the principles followed in other civilized mercantile centers."[18] Indeed, diversity was recognized as one of the principles or features typical of such centers. In the words of the nineteenth-century Triestine historian and public servant Pietro Kandler, "[T]he emporia, the great cities, have always embraced in their midst people of many nations."[19]

Generalizing beyond Trieste, both Sorkin and Dubin recognized that this broader pattern of civil standing for acculturated merchants in dynamic port cities was worthy of attention in both the early modern and modern periods of Jewish history and, moreover, for the transition between them. Sorkin found it particularly helpful for analyzing the emergence of eighteenth-century Haskalah in north-central Europe. For him, port Jews became key to conceptualizing the differences between the social and cultural conditions of Ashkenazim in northern and central European states that attempted to "graft mercantilist, commercial policy onto primarily agricultural societies," and those of Sephardic and Italian

[16] Ibid., 201.

[17] Ibid., 76–9, 218–20. For more on Old Regime political concepts, see also Lois C. Dubin, "Between Toleration and 'Equalities': Jewish Status and Community in Pre-Revolutionary Europe," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 1 (2002), 219–34.

[18] Dubin, *Port Jews*, 61–2.

[19] Pietro Kandler, "Viva Trieste!" *L'Istria* (Trieste), March 25, 1848, cited in Elio Apih, *Trieste* (Rome, 1988), 38.

Jews in Atlantic and Mediterranean port cities.[20] He employed the concept of port Jews to delineate first a broad comparison of these different Jewish sub-worlds and then a more focused contrast of their trajectories toward modernity, and, specifically, Enlightenment and Emancipation. In Sorkin's view, the port Jew came to "represent a particular experience of early modern Europe and a particular path to modernity."[21]

Sorkin presented the port Jew heuristically as a "social type" in order to address the "origins of the modern Jew" differently from the usual Ashkenazic-centered accounts.[22] In sketching the life-experiences and paths to modernity of Sephardic and Italian Jewish merchants in Mediterranean and Atlantic port cities, he contrasted the port Jew to the two stock figures in textbook accounts of the transition to modernity in western and central Europe – namely, the Court Jew, who served central European princes as agent and financier, and the *maskil* (advocate of Jewish Enlightenment), who propounded Enlightenment ideology in order to transform Jewish society and culture and prepare Jews for participation in European cultural and public realms. In deploying the heuristic device of social type, Sorkin surely did not mean to import all the theoretical baggage borne by the social-scientific terms "social type" and "ideal type," but rather to provide clear definition and delineation of the experiences of different social actors. Yet, his use of the singular – "the port Jew" – was rather telling, for his presentation was more concerned with individuals than with community.

Sorkin attributed five characteristics to the port Jew type: (1) migration and commerce; (2) the valuation of commerce; (3) legal status: that is, voluntary associations or merchant corporations rather than autonomous corporate Jewish communities; (4) re-education and Haskalah *avant la lettre*, that is, education of former *conversos* and their descendants about normative rabbinic Judaism in tandem with intellectual-cultural involvement with surrounding non-Jewish society; and (5) identity and belief: that is, adherence to ethnic identity and non-religious forms of communal solidarity rather than strict religious observance, an identity at times accompanied by skeptical and rationalist challenges to Jewish belief of the sort associated with Uriel Da Costa and Benedict Spinoza.

Reconsidering Sorkin's model, I would offer a few observations. Though Sorkin formally included Mediterranean Italian Jews in his model, he really abstracted his definition of the port Jew from the western Sephardic experience. Particularly with regard to communal structure and culture, he in effect generalized from the specific circumstances of

[20] Sorkin, "Enlightenment and Emancipation," 104–5. [21] Sorkin, "The Port Jew," 97.
[22] Ibid., 96–7, with reference to the classic Michael Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749–1824* (Detroit, 1967).

communities like Amsterdam and Bordeaux, both comprised of former *conversos.* In Amsterdam, these became "New Jews" (Yosef Kaplan's phrase), while in Bordeaux they retained a New Christian guise until the early eighteenth century. Legally structured like merchant corporations or voluntary associations, the Atlantic seaboard communities did not enjoy the legal corporate autonomy usually associated with traditional Jewish communities. In Amsterdam, the "new Jews" strove to build a normative Jewish community, but the formal *kehillah* was not all-embracing: it did not try to regulate commercial or economic life according to Halakhah and it never justified its narrowed purview in halakhic or ideological terms.[23]

In generalizing from the Atlantic seaboard Sephardic communities, Sorkin did not engage substantively with the different communal structures of Mediterranean and Italian port Jews. For instance, the Jewish community in Trieste was not simply a voluntary association. In the newly founded Tuscan free port of Livorno, Jews enjoyed remarkably extensive privileges of communal autonomy; in fact, most unusually, the community had jurisdiction over criminal as well as civil matters and was authorized to confer Tuscan subjecthood on its members.[24] Thus, while voluntarism and the absence of corporate structures were markers of the western Sephardic port Jew, as Sorkin maintained, they certainly did not characterize all communities of port Jews.

The cultural characteristics of the port Jew identified by Sorkin – namely, re-education, identity, and belief – also reflected the particular dilemmas and tensions of the Western Sephardim. Individualism, the need for re-education, and rationalist, sometimes heretical, skepticism were certainly germane to communities founded by former New Christians and their descendants. As the history of seventeenth-century Amsterdam shows, these phenomena posed considerable challenges to the fledgling Jewish community seeking to establish firm social and religious authority over its members. However, the struggles of these "new Jews" ought not to be generalized to all "port Jews."

Summarizing the cultural profile of port Jews, Sorkin noted their cultivation of the Bible, Hebrew language, and vernacular languages, and described them as acculturated to their surroundings. Yet, there was a certain ambiguity in how he related their profile to the Haskalah. On the

[23] Yosef Kaplan, "Jewish Amsterdam's Impact on Modern Jewish History," in Michael Graetz, ed., *Schöpferische Moments des europäischen Judentums* (Heidelberg, 2000), 19–62, esp. 47–8. Cf. Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London, 2000), 182–6.

[24] Lois C. Dubin, "Subjects into Citizens – Jewish Autonomy and Inclusion in Early Modern Livorno and Trieste," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 5 (2006), 51–81, esp. 60–1.

one hand, he evoked Baron's claims about Italian and Dutch Haskalah in using the formulation "Haskalah *avant la lettre*, that is, a broad Jewish textual curriculum and secular studies without an articulated ideology." On the other hand, in his overall geography of Haskalah, Sorkin located ideological Haskalah as the cultural production of central European communities founded by Court Jews while expressly noting that it was not generated by Jews in commercial societies or port cities. I had argued earlier that the acculturated Jewish merchants of Trieste did not produce Haskalah because an articulated ideology calling for broadened cultural horizons was simply unnecessary in their context. Similarly, Sorkin maintained that port Jews of *converso* origin were already immersed in Iberian culture, and Italian Jews were heirs to a tradition that was generally open to European culture; consequently, "the port Jews therefore neither needed nor developed a Haskalah."[25] In other words, though later port Jews might sympathize with Haskalah trends generated by others, they themselves tended not to produce Haskalah as an ideology.

Sorkin's model of the port Jew quickly gained currency. Particularly important was the enthusiastic reception by David Cesarani, then at the University of Southampton, UK, who organized a five-year research project on port Jews through the AHRB (Arts and Humanities Research Board) Parkes Centre for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations. In conjunction with the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town, three international conferences on port Jews and related subjects were held in England and South Africa in rapid succession, in 2001, 2003, and 2005. The resulting three volumes were each published as separate issues of the journal *Jewish Culture and History* and in book form, entitled respectively: (1) *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550–1950*; (2) *Jews and Port Cities 1590–1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism*; and (3) *Place and Displacement in Jewish History and Memory: Zakor v'Makor*.[26] These volumes contained essays by senior and

[25] Sorkin, "The Port Jew," 94; Lois C. Dubin, "Trieste and Berlin: The Italian Role in the Cultural Politics of the Haskalah," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987), 189–224, esp. 208–11, and *Port Jews*, 118–37, 213–16.

[26] David Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550–1950* (London, 2002), first published as a special issue of *Jewish Culture and History*: 4, 2 (2001); David Cesarani and Gemma Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities 1590–1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism* (London, 2006), first published as a special issue of *Jewish Culture and History*: 7, 1–2 (2004); David Cesarani, Tony Kushner, and Milton Shain, eds., *Place and Displacement in Jewish History and Memory: Zakor v'Makor* (London, 2009), first published as a special issue of *Jewish Culture and History*: 9, 2–3 (2009).

junior scholars, mostly from Britain, the US, Europe, and South Africa, with a few contributions from Australia and Israel as well.

In the first volume, *Port Jews*, Cesarani's introduction set an ambitious research agenda for an "exciting, collective endeavour to understand how seaways, ports, and cities fostered change in Jewish society."[27] The fundamental perspective of historical geography was added by Brian Hoyle's analysis of the changing dynamics between cities and ports over time.[28] Sorkin and I elaborated further upon our respective ideas of port Jews, while others contributed new case studies and raised additional issues, which will be discussed below.

In a wide-ranging survey, "Port Jews and the Three Regions of Emancipation," Sorkin demonstrated the significance of port Jews for distinguishing different paths by which Jews acquired civil and political liberties in Europe. Invoking Baron's important article "Newer Approaches to Jewish Emancipation," Sorkin identified the particular port Jew pattern of western European Jews, which he saw developing gradually from the initial situation of voluntary rather than autonomous Jewish communities; Jews as individuals lived subject to no specific corporate Jewry-laws and enjoyed many, though not all, of the same freedoms of residence, occupation, and property ownership as other members of society. Sorkin preferred my term "civil inclusion" to Baron's "equality minus certain disabilities" because he agreed that equality was anachronistic for corporate societies based on privileges. Sorkin contended that the distinctive western European path to Emancipation proceeded gradually and directly from the port Jews' status of civil inclusion, in contradistinction to the respective paths of Jewries in central and eastern Europe.[29]

In the two conference volumes *Port Jews* and *Jews and Port Cities*, I further developed my views of port Jews. In the essays entitled "Researching Port Jews and Port Jewries: Trieste and Beyond," and "'Wings on their Feet . . . and Wings on their Head': Reflections on the Study of Port Jews," I expanded upon some of the themes discussed by Sorkin, yet also offered different emphases.[30] In general, I eschewed the social type of the port Jew *qua* individual in order to consider communal

[27] David Cesarani, "Port Jews: Concepts, Cases and Questions," in Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews*, 1–11, esp. 3.

[28] Brian Hoyle, "Fields of Tension: Development Dynamics at the Port–City Interface," in Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews*, 12–30.

[29] David Sorkin, "Port Jews and the Three Regions of Emancipation," in Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews*, 31–46; Salo W. Baron, "Newer Approaches to Jewish Emancipation," *Diogenes* 29 (1960), 56–81; "civil inclusion" from Dubin, *Port Jews*, 198–225.

[30] Lois Dubin, "Researching Port Jews and Port Jewries: Trieste and Beyond," in Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews*, 47–58; and "'Wings on their Feet . . . and Wings on their Head':

dimensions of port Jews, as well as interrelations and networks linking them. I also sought to go beyond the former New Christian specifics that had colored certain features of Sorkin's model in order to attend more particularly to mercantile commerce and cultures as such – in other words, to the activities, experiences, and outlooks of Jewish maritime merchants and port-dwellers.

For a more general characterization of port Jews tied less closely to the specifics of the western Sephardim, I proposed an alternative list of features that emphasized invitation, comparison, and relation: (1) location in a dynamic maritime trading center that was part of a society or polity that valued international commerce; (2) perception by others of Jewish commercial aptitude and hence utility; (3) invitation or acceptance of Jewish merchants along with non-Jewish merchants for the purpose of developing commerce; (4) a relatively favorable legal and civil status for Jewish merchants, roughly comparable to that of other merchant groups, though not necessarily in all respects; and (5) a Jewish self-consciousness with a strong degree of relation – that is, (a) a keen sense of connection to other Jewish merchants living elsewhere, whether kin, business partners, or potential immigrants, as well as (b) a keen sense of interaction with and comparison to other non-Jewish merchants in the given port city.[31]

Accordingly, I devoted more attention to constructions of "utility," which I considered an essential ingredient in perceptions of port Jews. Drawing particularly on Trieste, I analyzed how a positive evaluation of commerce and its political pursuit could lead to a pragmatic toleration of diverse commercial actors, and, in some cases, to principled notions of a common, nonsectarian morality and behavior, with commerce and culture fused as secular virtue.

I also argued for a more communal approach to port Jews – namely, that the "port Jew" should be seen in the plural as "port Jews" and in the collective as "port Jewries." For, outside the Western Sephardic orbit, in places such as Livorno, Trieste, Salonika, Istanbul, and Odessa, Jewish merchants lived in non-voluntaristic Jewish communities that held corporate privileges. In general, the collective or communal dimension is critical to the study of commerce and culture in the early modern period. The salience of the communal dimension is nicely underscored by Francesca Trivellato's term "communitarian cosmopolitanism" for Livorno.[32]

Reflections on the Study of Port Jews," in Cesarani and Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities*, 14–30.

[31] Dubin, "Wings on their Feet," 17.

[32] Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, 2009), esp. 18–19.

In "'Wings on their Feet . . . and Wings on their Head,'" my keynote address to the second port Jew conference held in Cape Town in 2003 ("Jews and Port Cities 1590–1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism"), I called for analysis of mercantile attitudes and behavior through greater attention to port Jews in interrelation, in movement, in networks. Other scholars, too, variously stressed networks that involved Jews and non-Jews and that operated on the local, regional, diasporic, and global levels: notably, Trivellato on the cross-cultural networks of Livornese Jews; Evelyne Oliel-Grausz on networks and communication throughout the Sephardic Diaspora; and Tony Kushner on transmigrancy from England to the US.[33]

In probing mercantile habits of mind and behavior, I found a number of literary-historical sources especially suggestive. Mercury, the Roman god of commerce, was invoked by a French émigré in early nineteenth-century Trieste as he described the port city's busy merchants and ship-owners pursuing their "steady work . . . in the shade of the caduceus of Mercury and the trident of Neptune" – in other words, inspired and protected by the gods of commerce and the sea.[34] Mercury's qualities had been graphically described by Joseph Penso de la Vega in his late seventeenth-century work on the Amsterdam stock exchange, *Confusion de Confusiones*: "Mercurius, the god of merchants, is rightly portrayed with wings on head and feet. For, although some merchants have neither head nor feet, most seem to have wings on their feet witnessing the speed with which they move about and wings on their head considering the flight of their thoughts."[35] Thus, Mercury's winged sandals and winged hat represented movement and speed, of both foot and mind, as quintessential qualities of merchants. By means of this image, I discussed movement, distance, networks, and boundary-crossing as inherent elements in commercial exchange, as well as their possible relations to open-mindedness, cultural mediation, and cosmopolitanism – in other words, the possible connections between "wings on the feet" and "wings on the head," or commerce and culture, sometimes claimed by other scholars to be characteristic of entrepreneurial minorities.[36]

[33] Francesca Trivellato, "The Port Jews of Livorno and their Global Networks of Trade in the Early Modern Period," 31–48; Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Networks and Communication in the Sephardi Diaspora: An Added Dimension to the Concept of Port Jews and Port Jewries," 61–76; and Tony Kushner, "From Atlantic Hotel to Atlantic Park: Anglo-America, Port Jews and the Invisible Transmigrant," 247–60 – all in Cesarani and Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities.*

[34] Charles Albert Comte de Moré, cited in Dubin, "Wings on their Feet," 14.

[35] Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 278, cited in Dubin, "Wings on their Feet," 14.

[36] Mercury figures prominently also in Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, 2004), which depicts Jews as quintessential Mercurians or "service nomads." See also

The connection between long-distance trade and broad cultural horizons had been noted by central European *maskilim* in the 1780s. Port Jews captured the imaginations of figures such as Hartwig Wessely and Isaac Euchel and provided them with inspiring models of acculturated, productive, and esteemed Jewries. Addressing Triestine and Italian Jews, Wessely wrote: "Your customs have always been wise, in accord with the norms of human dignity and peace among human beings. In addition, your lands engage in commerce with great states in Europe, Asia, and Africa, and you come to learn of the customs of far-off places. All the communities of Israel in Italian lands have a similar advantage." Wessely considered the lack of maritime location and trade to be one factor in the low cultural level he attributed to the Jews of Ashkenaz and Poland: "these two regions have no access to the sea [*sic*], so their inhabitants do not trade with lands overseas but look only upon their immediate surroundings and nothing else."[37] Generalizing from what he knew firsthand about maritime commerce in Amsterdam and Copenhagen and what he had heard about Trieste, Wessely was, in a sense, the first "port Jew" theorist. Euchel wrote admiringly of the acculturation and standing of Livornese Jews: "There is no difference between their dress and that of the [other] inhabitants. They speak the language of the people correctly and eloquently . . . They pursue every occupation and business their hearts desire . . . I am proud to see my brothers living securely amidst the Gentiles."[38]

Thus, *maskilim* clearly evinced admiration for port Jews: the image of port Jews was very useful to them, for it seemed to represent a partial fulfillment of Haskalah goals. Still, in revisiting the dialectic of port Jews and Haskalah, I eschewed notions of proto-Haskalah or Haskalah *avant la lettre* for early modern Jewish merchants, since I remained convinced that the processes involved in mercantile pursuits and cultures were quite different from an ideological Haskalah movement and I wished to avoid distorting teleological characterizations.[39] From the observation that port

Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid, eds., *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe* (Seattle, 1997).

37 Naphtali Herz [Hartwig] Wessely, *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet*, vol. II: *Rav Ṭuv le-Vet Yisrael* (Berlin, 1782, unpaginated; Vienna, 1826, 25–6, 55–6; Warsaw, 1886, 41, 92–3); see also Dubin, "Trieste and Berlin," 205–8, and *Port Jews*, 120–1.

38 Euchel, cited in Dubin, "Trieste and Berlin," 206.

39 Dubin, "Trieste and Berlin," 211, and "Researching Port Jews," 58 n. 19. Cf. Kaplan, "Jewish Amsterdam's Impact," 62, where he attributed "new [cultural] syntheses" not to "an explicit Enlightenment ideology" but rather to the "unique social situation." On Jewish merchant cultures, see, for example, Natalie Zemon Davis, "Religion and Capitalism Once Again? Jewish Merchant Culture in the Seventeenth Century," *Representations* 59 (1997), 56–84, and Francesca Trivellato, "Images and Self-Images of Sephardic Merchants in Early Modern Europe and the Mediterranean," in Margaret C.

Jews themselves tended not to generate Haskalah ideologies, I argued that the recognition that not all forms of acculturation and appreciation of secular studies and general knowledge were identical would help historians to better contextualize and reconceptualize Haskalah proper.

Overall, for further port Jew studies, I proposed that mercantile attitudes and behavior be investigated more on their own terms and less in terms of the issues of Enlightenment and Emancipation prevalent in initial discussions. I thus called for a broader comparative approach to Jewish maritime merchants. On the one hand, I posed a heuristic challenge: to try to separate the "trident of Neptune" from the "caduceus of Mercury" – in other words, to distinguish analytically between the elements of sea and commerce. Which issues would arise if the focus were on ports, the sea, and all things maritime, and which, rather, if the focus were on commercial exchange and long-distance trade as such? On the other hand, I urged a broader treatment of port Jews not confined to early modern Sephardim and Italians. On the premise that "Comparison is an essential part of the promise of the *port Jew* concept," I argued that its true comparative potential for studying the interrelations of commerce, culture, and politics would emerge from specific studies of port Jewries in different times and places. To the research agenda, I added the goal of "analys[ing] *port Jews* and *port Jewries* comparatively while still maintaining a firm grasp of their key role in early modern Europe and without sacrificing the historical specificity of whichever port Jews – early modern or other, European or other – that we investigate."[40]

In the two port Jew conferences and volumes, a number of scholars took up the themes that Sorkin and I had outlined. Some debated the wisdom of extending consideration of port Jews beyond the early modern, mostly Sephardic moment, reserving "port Jews" for the early modern model and using the phrase "Jews in port cities" for other times and places. The title of the second volume, *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990*, reflects this distinction, though in fact the contents of both volumes met the charge of the broad research agenda. Significantly, Kushner proposed a different type of port Jew: the transmigrants in ports of embarkation, way-station, and arrival during the mass migrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the result would be a less elitist, more conflictual, and more global perspective on port Jews, port cities, and the sea.[41]

Jacob and Catherine Secretan, eds., *The Self-Perception of Early Modern Capitalists* (New York, 2008), 49–74.

[40] Dubin, "Researching Port Jews," 57.

[41] Kushner, "From Atlantic Hotel to Atlantic Park," in Cesarani and Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities*.

Scholars pursued port Jews in a host of port cities: London, Southampton, Portsmouth, Bristol, Liverpool, and Glasgow in Britain; Livorno, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Salonika, Odessa, Libau, and Corfu in Europe; Willemstad and Charleston in the Americas; Cape Town in Africa; and Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Manila, and even inland Harbin in Asia.[42] Especially in the second volume, a number of the essays sought to insert more of the nitty-gritty of commercial exchange and the tangible social realities of port cities into the portrayal of port Jews. From these discussions, there emerged several new themes: (1) the practices and discourse of race and slave-holding among the early modern Atlantic Sephardim; (2) cautionary notes about assuming toleration and cosmopolitanism in heterogeneous port cities, and the need to pay heed to interethnic and majority–minority relations and group competition, as well as different political contexts, such as capital city, empire, or emerging nation-state; (3) tensions in stations of mass migration. Jonathan Goldstein found the features of Sorkin's port Jew paradigm in Asian communities – among them, provocatively, the inland railroad hub of Harbin, China; he therefore suggested that distribution centers and entrepôts of all kinds might share some of the characteristics of seaports. In some cases, commercial exchange might trump seaport location, or, in other words, Mercury might triumph over Neptune!

THE ATLANTIC TURN

In the "Conclusion" to the second conference volume, co-editor Gemma Romain urged that port Jew studies link up with the interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches in the burgeoning fields of "Atlantic studies"

[42] For the themes highlighted in this paragraph, see, for example, on race, Jonathan Schorsch, "Portmanteau Jews: Sephardim and Race in the Early Modern World," in Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews*; and Gemma Romain, "Ethnicity, Identity and 'Race': The Port Jews of Nineteenth-Century Charleston," in Cesarani and Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities*. On different political contexts, see David Cesarani, "The Forgotten Port Jews of London: Court Jews Who Were Also Port Jews"; John Klier, "A Port, Not a Shtetl: Reflections on the Distinctiveness of Odessa"; and Mark Levene, "Port Jewry of Salonika: Between Neo-Colonialism and Nation-State" – all three in Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews*. On port Jews in Asia, see Jonathan Goldstein, "The Sorkin and Golab Theses and their Applicability to South, Southeast, and East Asian Port Jewry," in Cesarani, ed, *Port Jews*; and Goldstein, "Singapore, Manila and Harbin as Reference Points for Asian 'Port Jewish' Identity," in Cesarani and Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities*. Several articles in both volumes deal with tensions and competition. See also Patricia Herlihy, "Port Jews of Odessa and Trieste – A Tale of Two Cities," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 2 (2003), 183–98.

and "littoral studies." In these, many scholars had begun to examine "the role of oceans and sea basins as highways of exchanges between world areas as well as social and cultural sites in their own right" with new emphases on voyaging, boundary crossing, transnational connectedness, diversity, and diaspora.[43] Indeed, as Romain noted, a panel on "Port Jews and Atlantic Studies"– chaired by me, with contributions by Arthur Kiron, Wim Klooster, and Holly Snyder – had already been presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies conference in December 2003. Our papers were subsequently published as "Port Jews of the Atlantic," a special issue of the journal *Jewish History*.[44]

In the "Introduction," I asserted that the Atlantic dimension was vital for even the classic port Jews of the early modern period itself, for the success of many of these Jewish and crypto-Jewish merchants derived from the commercial connections they provided between imperial metropolis and colony during Europe's overseas expansion. Klooster studied the migration, travel, trade, political privileges, and religious identities of New Christian and Jewish merchants in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch Atlantic colonies. Snyder focused on the circulation of political ideas concerning rights of Jews as subjects, citizens, and voters in the British Atlantic – in both England and the colonies, notably Jamaica – in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Significantly for the history of Emancipation, Jews in both Dutch and British colonies gained protection as legal subjects and naturalization earlier than in the mother countries. In the English-language Atlantic, Kiron traced the circuits of cultural exchange that operated between London, Kingston (Jamaica), and Philadelphia from the colonial period into the early nineteenth century, characterizing this Sephardic-inspired, enlightened but religiously observant Jewish culture as an "Atlantic Jewish republic of letters" and "Atlantic Haskalah."[45]

In the concluding article of "Port Jews of the Atlantic," Jonathan Sarna noted the foundational role of port Jews in almost all the New World Jewish communities. With regard to the colonial port Jews in North America, he pointed out that they were not a "social type" but rather "comprised the

[43] Gemma Romain, "Conclusion," in Cesarani and Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities*, 291–5, esp. 293–4, citing "Seascapes, Littoral Cultures and Trans-Oceanic Exchanges," 2003 conference at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[44] Lois Dubin, ed., *Jewish History* 20, 2 (2006), special issue on "Port Jews of the Atlantic."

[45] Wim Klooster, "Communities of Port Jews and their Contacts in the Dutch Atlantic World," 129–45; Holly Snyder, "Rules, Rights and Redemption: The Negotiation of Jewish Status in British Atlantic Port Towns, 1740–1831," 147–70; and Arthur Kiron, "An Atlantic Jewish Republic of letters?" 171–211 – all in Dubin, ed., "Port Jews of the Atlantic."

leadership and heart of the community"; they were both Sephardic and Ashkenazic; and their commerce and secular rationalism did not preclude religious ideas of messianism and mysticism. Sarna highlighted the eventual emergence and significance of the distinctive English-language, transnational, and trans-continental diaspora.[46]

The Atlantic turn in port Jew studies converged with other recent scholarly trends. As stated above, Jonathan Israel's work on Sephardim stressed their trans-oceanic networks in the early modern maritime empires. Integrating Jews and Jewish history within the broader contexts of European expansion and Atlantic studies has been at the heart of two other wide-ranging volumes: *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West 1450–1800*, edited by Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, and *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800*, edited by Richard Kagan and Philip Morgan.[47]

For Jewish history specifically, I articulated the potential of the Atlantic port Jew perspective in two further respects. First, it could help bridge European and American Jewish histories, too often kept separate. Second, it could suggest a new way of constructing regions in Jewish history: according to maritime basins and oceans, such as the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, as well as the Atlantic. Did the links between port cities and littorals help forge distinctive Jewish maritime civilizations and subcultures? Thus, a more aqua-centric, maritime, transnational, and trans-oceanic approach would draw on broader scholarly trends that analyze how "Oceans connect" peoples, goods, and far-flung diasporic communities;[48] it would thereby help to produce a more global Jewish history.

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS: WHITHER PORT JEWS?

While some scholars responded to port Jews by examining Jewish life in various port cities and by considering Jewish mercantile cultures and

[46] Jonathan D. Sarna, "Port Jews in the Atlantic: Further Thoughts," in Dubin, ed., "Port Jews of the Atlantic," 213–19.

[47] Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West 1450–1800* (New York, 2001), and Richard Kagan and Philip Morgan, eds., *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* (Baltimore, 2009).

[48] Kären Wigen and Jessica Harland-Jacobs, eds., *The Geographic Review* 89, 2 (1999), special issue "Oceans Connect"; see also Desanka Schwara, "Rediscovering the Levant: A Heterogeneous Structure as a Homogeneous Historical Region," *European Review of History – Revue européenne d'Histoire* 10, 2 (2003), 233–51.

politics on the cusp of modernity, others began to conceive of "Jewish maritime studies." For example, Joachim Schlör turned to the sea itself as a tangible phenomenon and as a motif, thus focusing on seafaring, migration by sea, and the relations of particular cities to the sea.[49] The scholarship on port Jews has resonated in other directions as well, inspiring Sebouh Aslanian to add "port Armenians" to Armenian history.[50]

The idea of port Jews has also engendered cautionary notes and criticisms. A few examples will suffice. Some have objected to Sorkin's initial deployment of "social type" because they find its theoretical baggage unnecessary for description and analysis of the realia of the Sephardic Jewish mercantile world.[51] In Matthias Lehmann's studies of enlightened Ladino tracts in eastern Mediterranean port cities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he proposes that "port Jews" applies best to a particular segment of the Jewish community – namely, that group seeking to "Westernize" their "Oriental" coreligionists – rather than to an entire community.[52] As mentioned above, Trivellato has countered an excessive emphasis on individualism and voluntarism in notions of port Jews by highlighting the "communitarian cosmopolitanism" of the Jewish merchants of Livorno.

Generally, it has become clear that cosmopolitanism itself has to be contextualized more carefully. A positive evaluation and utilitarian appreciation of international trade and a diverse mercantile population did not always lead to tolerant attitudes or behavior, concerning Jews and among Jews. Legal status and social relations should be clearly differentiated: Jewish merchants could enjoy a relatively favorable legal status even while social relations could remain fraught and problematic. Moreover, religious–ethnic differences and economic competition took on a different coloration later in some emerging nation-states, when cosmopolitan port

[49] Joachim Schlör, ed., *Jewish Culture and History* 13, 2 (2011), special issue "Towards Jewish Maritime Studies," and Schlör, "Tel Aviv: (With its) Back to the Sea? An Excursion into Jewish Maritime Studies," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8, 2 (2009), 215–35. See also Nadav Kashtan, ed., *Seafaring and the Jews* (London, 2001), and Gilbert Herbert, "A View of the Sea: Jews and the Maritime Tradition," in Brauch *et al.*, eds., *Jewish Topographies*, 181–99.

[50] Sebouh D. Aslanian, "'Wings on their Feet and on their Heads': Reflections on Port Armenians and Five Centuries of Global Armenian Print Culture," *The Armenian Weekly*, September 1, 2012, 7–12.

[51] David Graizbord, review of David Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews*, H-Atlantic, H-Net Reviews, May, 2005: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10513; and C. S. Monaco, "Port Jews or a People of the Diaspora? A Critique of the Port Jew Concept," *Jewish Social Studies* (n.s.) 15, 2 (2009), 137–66.

[52] Matthias B. Lehmann, "A Livornese 'Port Jew' and the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire," *Jewish Social Studies* (n.s.) 11, 2 (2005), 51–76, esp. 63–4, 69–71.

cities of multinational empires had to meet more exclusivist demands for political and social homogeneity.[53]

Certainly, when scholars look beyond the original early modern Western Sephardic and Italian contexts, they should not expect to find all the features originally identified there obtaining elsewhere without modification. If scholars continue to find the category of port Jews useful in different contexts, such as colonial port cities in the Americas, port cities in the Levant or Asia, or in the later hubs of mass migration, they will have to determine which models and generalizations, if any, hold there.

Let us return now to the large claims concerning culture and politics – namely, that port Jews signaled a distinctive, important, and hitherto neglected route toward Jewish integration in early modern and modern Europe. David Ruderman raised a challenge when he averred that the "intellectual and cultural proclivities of early modern Jews can hardly be reduced to the single factor of whether they lived near the sea or whether they were land-locked"; in his view, though "Port Jews were a significant part of the dynamic and cosmopolitan world of early modern Sephardim ... the notion remains one-dimensional and cannot explain many other aspects of the cultural lives of early modern Jews."[54] In fact, the idea of port Jews did not focus on location alone, but rather on the nexus between location and overseas commerce in producing certain kinds of outlooks and behavior among Jews. Its proponents did not claim that a Jew had to live in a seaport and be engaged in overseas commerce in order to be culturally active or innovative in the early modern period; rather, they sought to determine how maritime mercantile activity might affect Jewish culture and behavior. As suggested above, as part of that inquiry, commercial exchange ought to be weighed as a factor in its own right. The mentalities and behavior of Jewish merchants engaged in long-distance trade over land and across seas ought to be compared so that long-distance trade can be better understood as a cultural and social, as well as economic, force in Jewish history.

Neither Sorkin nor I presented port Jews as the motor of all Jewish cultural change in early modern Europe or as an over-arching, exclusive explanatory model for all of Jewish culture at the inception of Jewish

[53] See now, for example, Tullia Catalan, "The Ambivalence of a Port-City: The Jews of Trieste from the 19th to the 20th Century," *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* (Journal of Fondazione CDEC) 2 (October, 2011): www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=232.

[54] David B. Ruderman, "Why Periodization Matters – On Early Modern Jewish Culture and Haskalah," in Feiner and Ruderman, eds., "Early Modern Culture and Haskalah," 23–32, esp. 28.

modernity. Rather, our purpose was to offer a supplementary interpretation that would highlight a kind of Jew or groups of Jews who simply did not fit the regnant models. Why, for example, look at acculturated Sephardic merchants engaged in overseas maritime commerce only through the lens of Haskalah, asking whether they were or were not proto-*maskilim* or *maskilim*? That question is limiting and distorting as it risks imposing a set of later, often anachronistic, categories, and of encasing social processes within the often unsuitable containers of ideological movements.

Thus, the category of port Jews was meant to counter the assumptions that Jews took significant steps toward becoming modern Europeans *only* by way of ideological Haskalah and that their legal status was ameliorated *only* as a result of the granting of civil and political rights in a dramatic and sudden act of legal emancipation. Yet, of course, the importance of those well-known routes cannot be denied. The gradualist paths of acculturation and legal–political change presented as the ways of port Jews do not displace or remove those. Rather, they add alternative routes to produce a more variegated and complex map.

With regard to the claim of continuity between the relatively favorable civil-legal status of port Jews and eventual political emancipation, Francesca Bregoli has recently argued that the status and privileges of Jewish merchants in Livorno did not lead to a smooth transition from civil inclusion to political emancipation. Rather, she points to an "arrested political integration of Livornese Jewry in the 1780s compared to developments in all other Tuscan Jewish communities."[55] Indeed, as the corporate Livornese Jewish community was maintained, the rights of Jews *as individuals* in Livorno did for a time lag behind those in other Tuscan communities. The right of political representation on the municipal council was granted in 1780 for a communal representative and not to individuals as such. Still, I would argue that this right, whether collective or individual, was significant as a Jewish political right of representation. In general, as stated above, the privileges of the Livornese Jewish community, which included civil and criminal jurisdiction and the ability to extend Tuscan subject-citizenship to newly arrived Jewish members, were highly exceptional for any Jewish community, in Italy or elsewhere. Thus, it may not be

[55] Francesca Bregoli, "'Two Jews Walk into a Coffeehouse': The 'Jewish Question,' Utility, and Political Participation in Late Eighteenth-century Livorno," in Francesca Bregoli and Federica Francesconi, eds., *Jewish History* 24, 3–4 (2010), special issue on "Tradition and Transformation in Eighteenth-Century Europe: Jewish Integration in Comparative Perspective," 309–29, esp. 319–23. See now Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford, 2014).

wise to generalize too broadly from this particular case. It is a corrective example to be borne in mind, but not one that by itself disproves the hypothesis of continuity between the status of civil inclusion and eventual legal emancipation for many port Jews.

In conclusion, the intention behind the idea of port Jews was not to provide a new master key to early modern or modern Jewish history. It was not meant to diminish the importance of other long-recognized factors, but rather to broaden horizons and to offer a fresh perspective. To focus on Jewish merchants engaged in international maritime trade as commercial, cultural, and public actors is to see Jews as part and parcel of emerging early modern Europe and its overseas expansion. The port Jew perspective highlights some of the distinctive features of early modern Jewish history. Moreover, a look forward to the legacies of the activities, mentalities, and status of port Jews situates them on the cusp between early modern and modern periods, while providing additional tools for assessing the continuities between them.

As it probes the interplay between commerce, culture, and politics, the study of port Jews converges with a number of recent historiographical trends. It is one of the many signals of renewed attention to Jewish economic history in a way that is neither reductionist nor apologetic. It focuses attention on heterogeneous port cities, seas, littorals, and maritime basins, especially the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. It examines the sinews of commercial, cultural, and diasporic networks. It highlights place and space as such as factors in Jewish history and culture – as tangible geographic sites, as the processes of movement and displacement, and as conceptual categories. While interdisciplinarity may be helpful to the study of port Jews, comparative history is surely of its essence. Port Jews continue to beckon toward cross-cultural, transnational, and global Jewish history.

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CHAPTER 21

JEWS IN THE POLISH–LITHUANIAN ECONOMY (1453–1795)

ADAM TELLER

One of the characteristics of the early modern period in Jewish history was the high level of integration of Jewish economic activity into the European economy. In the period from 1450 to 1815, both Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews enjoyed economic opportunities and possibilities for enriching themselves that had been unknown in previous centuries. These were not limited to a single sector of the economy or to a specific region. They covered a broad range of economic activities – such as local, regional, and transregional trade, state finance, banking and the provision of credit, tax farming, agricultural administration and estate leasing, manufacture and crafts – and could be found across Europe, in centers such as Venice, Livorno, London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Frankfurt am Main, Vienna, Prague, Krakow, Brody, and Warsaw.

The reasons for this development are to be sought in a number of major shifts which occurred in the fifteenth century and early sixteenth centuries: the first was the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, which radically altered European trade routes and ushered in the age of maritime trade, mercantilism, and European colonialism – developments encouraged by the discovery of America in 1492. The second was the demographic transformation of Jewish life following the expulsions from the Iberian Peninsula and the towns of the Holy Roman Empire in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This meant that the Jews, driven from their previous homes, tended to gravitate toward those states whose policy of economic development permitted Jewish settlement. In the sixteenth century, this brought many Jews to the rapidly expanding Ottoman Empire and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, whose territories remained home to the majority of the world's Jewish population until the Holocaust.[1]

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the search for tolerance and economic opportunity would bring some Jews (and New Christians) to the

[1] J. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (Oxford, 1998).

ports of the Atlantic world, whose economies were beginning to develop much more quickly than those in the south and the east. Nonetheless, the number of Jews in western Europe and the Atlantic basin remained small, with the majority continuing to make their living in the increasingly difficult economic conditions of Poland–Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire. It is the experience of these "eastern" Jews – in particular, the Jews of early modern eastern Europe – which will be the focus of discussion here. There is good reason to focus on east European Jewry, because, by the end of the early modern period, it had become the largest, and arguably the most dynamic, center in the Jewish world.[2]

The relative paucity of research on Jewish economic history over the last sixty years means that it is difficult to identify a suitable theoretical framework within which to analyze eastern European Jewish economic life. Studies by postwar Polish economic historians such as Witold Kula and Jerzy Topolski, who wrote in the Marxist tradition, did provide some important insights into the nature and development of the early modern Polish economy. However, Marxism's rigid approach to economic analysis (as well as the exigencies of censorship in People's Poland) did not permit any significant analysis of the Jews' role in the Polish–Lithuanian economy.[3] Studies of "economic modernization" and the search for the roots of capitalism – from Max Weber to Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein – have enabled the examination of Jewish economic activity, particularly in terms of its putative proto-capitalist formations.[4] The teleological nature of this approach, however, is not conducive to the analysis of early modern and modern non-capitalist economies on their own terms, and so is not overly helpful in the examination of the late feudal structures of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Jews' roles in them.

Middleman minority theory, first developed by Edna Bonacich in the 1970s, might seem to present a general framework within which Jewish economic activity can be not only studied but also compared with that of other, similar, groups.[5] But it too is problematic. In a feudal economy, such as that of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, almost every group can be defined as a middleman, thus rendering the concept rather

[2] See A. Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia,* vol. I: *1350–1881* (London, 2010).

[3] W. Kula, *An Economic Theory of the Feudal System* (London, 1987); J. Topolski, *Gospodarska polska a europejska w XVI–XVIII wieku* (Poznań, 1977).

[4] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York, 1976); F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century,* vol. II: *The Wheels of Commerce* (London, 1985); I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, vols. I–III (New York, 1974–89).

[5] On this, see W. Zenner, *Minorities in the Middle: A Cross-Cultural Analysis* (New York, 1991).

meaningless. In addition, serious doubt has been cast on the status of the Polish–Lithuanian Jews as a minority in any but the strictest religious sense.[6]

A more promising approach may be found in the New Institutional Economic Theory, championed by, among others, Douglass North. Unlike classical economic theory, this approach portrays the choices of economic actors as largely culturally determined.[7] The ability to engage in economic activity is in every time and place circumscribed by the existence in any society of a variety of economic institutions. These are understood as a range of phenomena from the legal and constitutional structures of the state, which determine property rights and contractual relations, to various social attitudes and ideologies, which determine the ways in which economic activity is perceived and so engaged in.[8] In order to follow processes of economic development, it is important to map out the economic institutions in any society and examine how they changed over time. Though North himself used this approach to explain the development of capitalism, it is an extremely effective way of analyzing any economic system. Moreover, since it might be argued that a society's attitude toward the Jews and their economic activity itself forms one of its economic institutions, the theory provides an excellent framework for studying Jewish economic history.[9]

Four such "economic institutions" will therefore be examined here in order to shed light on the Jews' economic activity and its place within the Polish–Lithuanian economy. Separate discussion will be devoted to three: the urban market, the agricultural sector, and the Jewish communal institutions. The fourth – the Polish nobility, and particularly the magnates who formed its uppermost stratum – will not be dealt with separately but will form part of each of the discussions. The enormous growth in their political power in the early modern period meant that they could effectively dictate the terms of Polish economic development in general to suit their group needs.[10] This was important for the Jews, since their business connections with the nobility gave them and their institutions a highly significant role in the economy. Thus, though the urban and agricultural

[6] Cf. G. Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004), 1–56.

[7] D. North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York, 1981).

[8] A. Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge, 2006), 3–23.

[9] See, e.g., F. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, 2009).

[10] J. Lukowski, *Liberty's Folly: The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1991).

markets were clearly fundamental to the Polish economy as a whole and the Jewish community was just sectorial in nature, it too came to form an important economic institution in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, particularly in the eighteenth century.[11]

While the focus of this discussion will be on Poland–Lithuania, it is important to note that conditions there were not unique. The manorial economy could be found in some parts of Prussia, Bohemia, and Moravia – though legal restrictions meant the Jews' roles were somewhat different from those in the Commonwealth. The situation in eighteenth-century Hungary was similar too – and there Jews did begin to play roles similar to those they had in the Polish–Lithuanian economy. Research on Jewish economic activity in these regions is still under-developed, so beyond pointing out the parallels, it is difficult to reach broader conclusions.[12]

THE URBAN MARKET

The defining characteristic of the Polish–Lithuanian Jews' place within the urban market was legal in nature. From the earliest period of their organized settlement on Polish lands in the thirteenth century, they were legally recognized as a second urban group, with rights and duties parallel to (though not the same as) those of the non-Jewish burghers. In the early modern period, this situation found expression in the granting of special privileges to Jewish communities, reminiscent of the *locatio* ("foundational privileges"), given to the towns themselves.[13] The reasons for this development are to be sought in the desire of the Polish kings – and later the noble town-owners – to integrate the Jews into the urban market despite the opposition of the Christian townsmen. The latter – often, until the sixteenth century, of German origin – were themselves legally empowered by the kings and town-owners to organize the town according to the model of urban autonomy embodied in the German Magdeburg Law, and so viewed the Jews (also largely of German origin) as foreign interlopers and destructive competitors. Initially, at least, this left the Jews in an ambiguous situation: their rights to engage in the urban economic activities of

[11] J. Goldberg, "The Role of the Jewish Community in the Socio-Political Structure of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth," *Polin* 22 (2010), 142–55.

[12] In the meantime, see R. Gates, "Eighteenth-Century Schutzherren: Esterhazy Patronage of the Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 47 (1985), 189–208; H. Lupovich, "Jews and the Zichy Estate: A Case Study in Magnate–Jewish Relations," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 7 (2008), 15–37.

[13] For a collection of such privileges, see *Jewish Privileges in the Polish Commonwealth: Charters of Rights Granted to Jewish Communities in Poland–Lithuania in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, vols. I–III, ed. J. Goldberg (Jerusalem, 1985–2002).

trade and crafts were enshrined in their community privileges while they were excluded, on religious grounds, from belonging to the Christian guild organizations which were the only legal framework for doing business in the towns.[14]

The situation was particularly fraught in the large royal towns, mostly in western Poland, which were the main centers of Jewish settlement in eastern Europe in the sixteenth century. Various resolutions of the tension were sought: individual Jewish communities and urban councils concluded compromise settlements known as "pacta" to define, among other things, the parameters of Jewish economic activity in the towns. Though encouraged by a law of 1538, these agreements rarely satisfied either party for long and so soon broke down.

Another means of resolving the economic tensions between Jews and burghers was to bring their conflicts before the king. Here rulings could go either way, depending on the precise wording of documents or the ways in which the opposing arguments were presented, so that the royal court, too, could not provide long-term resolutions of the economic tensions in the towns. A third way of resolving the tensions was through unilateral action on the part of the urban councils, which they took by requesting privileges known as *De Non Tolerandis Judaeis*, which gave them the right to expel the Jews from their jurisdictions. Some thirty-eight towns had such privileges, but found their effectiveness limited because the local communities were able to evade them. They did this in two major ways: one was to move to a nearby settlement and continue doing business with their clients from there; the other was to continue living inside the city walls but to move to property owned by noblemen. Under Polish law, noble-owned property inside towns was exempt from municipal jurisdiction, so Jews living in these enclaves, known as *jurydiki*, were not affected by the expulsions.[15]

A common Jewish strategy for dealing with the ambiguity of their status was to work around it in different ways. A popular method was to engage in regional and transregional rather than local trade. The urban monopolies covered only local retail trade, leaving the wholesale business open to Jewish merchants. Some of these businessmen were involved in transregional trade between the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and its neighbors to the west and south – Brandenburg, Saxony, Silesia, Bohemia,

[14] P. Kramerówna, "Żydowskie cechy rzemieślnicze w dawnej Polsce," *Miesięcznik Żydowski* 2 (1932), 259–98.

[15] J. Goldberg, "*De Non Tolerandis Judaeis*: On the Introduction of Anti-Jewish Laws into Polish Towns and the Struggle Against Them," in Sh. Yeivin, ed., *Studies in Jewish History Presented to Prof. Raphael Mahler on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Merhavia, 1974), 39–52; F. Guesnet, "Agreements between Neighbours: The 'Ugody' as a Source on Jewish–Christian Relations in Early Modern Poland," *Jewish History* 24 (2010), 257–70.

Moravia, Hungary, Wallachia, and other regions of the Ottoman Empire. Many more dealt in regional trade, much of which was carried on during the time of the regional fairs, held a few times a year in the larger towns. During these fairs, all local monopolistic restrictions were lifted, allowing Jewish merchants to buy and sell freely. Jewish trade in early modern Poland therefore became a highly mobile phenomenon with merchants on the road for long periods of time. With the spread of printing, special merchants' calendars were produced during the first half of the seventeenth century, listing all the major fairs and giving their dates according to both the Jewish and Christian calendars. The importance of Jewish merchants for these fairs may be seen in the fact that many of them were moved from Saturdays to the other days of the week when Jews were able to participate in them.[16]

Sixteenth-century customs records indicate that Jews traded to a great extent in raw materials, such as skins, furs, wax, lead, and salt, as well as plain woolen cloth, copper, and iron. These, together with timber, potash, and oxen from Ruthenia and the Ukraine, were also among the most important goods exported from Poland by Jews. The imports they made included Hungarian, German, and even Italian wine, fine cloth such as linen, silk, and woolens, spices, jewels, and paper. They were also prominent in the distribution of herring imported to Poland from the North Sea via the Baltic.[17]

In order to facilitate their long-range trade both inside and outside the Commonwealth, Polish Jews developed various credit instruments: the first was the *mamran*, a simple type of promissory note in the form of a bearer bond; the second was the so-called *heter-iska*, which allowed Jews to extend to each other mercantile credit without transgressing the halakhic prohibition on lending money. The inflationary conditions of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, however, made lending money against pawns much less popular, with Jews preferring to take rather than give loans. Jewish merchants also seem to have become expert in the business of currency exchange – a business which led to them sporadically being accused of currency fraud and harmful speculation. A more serious problem was bankruptcy, often caused by the extreme fluctuations that characterized early modern markets. Since bankruptcies disrupted local trade, harmed Jewish economic networks, and led to non-Jewish creditors holding other Jews and even whole communities responsible for bad debts, the Polish-Jewish parliament (the "Council of Four Lands") instituted a set of rigorous regulations in 1624 aimed at dealing

[16] I. Schiper, *Dzieje handlu żydowskiego na ziemiach polskich* (Warsaw, 1937).
[17] R. Mahler, *Toledot ha-Yehudim be-Polin* (Merhavia, 1946), 98–105.

with the problem and ensuring that all claims of bankruptcy by Jews were genuine.[18]

Long-range trade was new to the Polish Jews, whose Ashkenazic ancestors in the Middle Ages had been mostly involved in the sedentary business of moneylending. It had a number of social and cultural effects. One was a change in women's status. While husbands were away on the road doing business, wives stayed at home running that side of the family business and dealing with clients as they arrived. This made their economic profile much more public than previously – a development noted with some disapproval by rabbinic authorities. Another cultural effect of the new economic situation concerned the amount of time Jewish men devoted to study – a religious commandment. One sixteenth-century author noted that many Jewish merchants, tired from their travels, had little time to devote to study. Though Jewish culture held that Jews could compensate for a lack of personal engagement in study by funding scholars and students, it seems that many Polish–Lithuanian Jewish businessmen preferred to spend their money on other things.[19]

Those Jews unable or unwilling to engage in regional trade were forced to do business on the local market with all its tensions and difficulties. The impossibility of joining Christian guilds greatly hampered the development of Jewish crafts for most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, except for those occupations, such as butchery, bakery, and tailoring, where the exigencies of Jewish law forced Jews to engage in them. In the same period, Jews were largely prevented from owning shops in the central market squares of towns and so were unable to compete with the Christian merchants on their own terms. This led Jewish businessmen to develop their own economic strategies, which involved breaking the urban mercantile cartel by reducing profit margins and relying on increased turnover to make up the difference. Once again, this led to a highly energetic attitude toward trade: Jews were forced to do business on the streets or even outside the city gates where the urban monopoly on trade was not enforced. The scramble to achieve ever-greater turnover led many merchants to use mercantile agents, who worked on a percentage (thus creating a means for many poorer Jews to eke out a living). Another way of increasing turnover, especially amongst the less wealthy, was to press all family members into the business. Wives and daughters regularly found themselves buying and selling in public, and though the Jewish authorities

[18] The regulations are published in I. Halperin, ed., *Pinkas Va'ad Arba` ha-'Aratzot* (Jerusalem, 1945), 45–51, no. III.

[19] M. Rosman, "Innovative Tradition: Jewish Culture in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth," in D. Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews* (New York, 2002), 519–70.

questioned the practice on the grounds of halakhic stringency and public morality, their opposition was overridden by the economic needs of the population.[20]

Though some economic historians, starting with Werner Sombart, have argued that the ways in which the Jewish merchants in Poland–Lithuania (among other places) subverted the urban mercantile monopoly was a harbinger of early capitalism, their effect here seems to have been quite the reverse.[21] Jewish merchants created ties with the landed Polish nobility (the *szlachta*) – another group whose interests were harmed by the towns. Since the Christian burghers fixed low prices for the grain that the nobility was interested in selling and high prices on the luxury and other goods it was interested in buying, the nobility increasingly turned to Jewish merchants eager to undercut their Christian competitors. The nobility was also traditionally hostile to the (Christian) urban estate, which it viewed as a potential political competitor, so economic co-operation with the Jews seemed all the more attractive. For the Jews, the nobility were wealthy and powerful clients, well worth cultivating. Jews began to be employed as mercantile agents by Polish noblemen (whose status demanded that they not engage in trade themselves), using their knowledge of market conditions and trade networks to enrich their masters while at the same time extending the exemptions from taxes and customs enjoyed by the nobility to their own goods. Thus, competition with the urban monopolies led the Jews to become involved with the nobility, the mainstay of Poland–Lithuania's feudal economy.[22]

The strengthening of the nobility's status within the Commonwealth as a whole also had significant impact on the Jews' economic life. As part of a series of laws strengthening the nobility's control over their estates, a law was passed by the Sejm in 1539 giving estate-owners exclusive dominion over all Jews who lived under their jurisdiction. Since the nobility was, on the whole, favourably disposed to Jewish merchants, whom they saw as wealth-creators, Jews began to move out of the royal towns in which they lived and settled in the "private" noble-owned towns, where they also began to enjoy better social and economic conditions vis-à-vis the Christian burghers. Following the Union of Lublin and the transfer of Ukraine to the Polish Crown in 1569, the move from royal to private towns

[20] E. Fram, *Ideals Face Reality: Jewish Law and Life in Poland, 1550–1655* (Cincinnati, 1997).

[21] W. Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, trans. M. Epstein (New Brunswick, NJ, 1982); N. Z. Davis, "Religion and Capitalism Once Again? Jewish Merchant Culture in the Seventeenth Century," *Representations* 59 (1997), 56–84.

[22] J. Kalik, *Ha-'Atsulah ha-Polanit ve-ha-Yehudim ba-Mamlekhet Polin-Liṭa' bi-re`'i ha-Teḥikah bat ha-Zman* [The Polish Nobility and the Jews in the Dietine Legislation of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth] (Jerusalem, 1997).

became part of the process of colonizing the Ukraine, with the Jews playing a key role in the development of urban centers and markets in that underdeveloped region. This meant that over the next two or three generations the center of Jewish life moved from west to east within the Commonwealth. All this was a slow process, however, taking two centuries and more to complete, only really picking up pace in the years following Poland's mid-seventeenth-century wars.[23]

These began with the Khmelnytsky uprising of 1648 in Ukraine and continued with the Muscovite invasion of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, followed by a Swedish invasion from the north, which took Poznań, Warsaw, and Kraków before it was finally repulsed. The final cessation of hostilities came with the Peace of Andrusów in 1667. The events of this period are characterized in the Jewish communal memory as a series of brutal massacres and murders – particularly in Ukraine. Though the great loss of life undoubtedly came as a terrible shock to Polish–Lithuanian Jewry, the community proved resilient enough to make up the demographic losses and to grow rapidly for the next 250 years.[24] The long-term social and economic consequences of these events for the Jews are not therefore to be found in the massacres themselves, but rather in their role in the reconstruction of the Polish economy that followed them.[25]

The destruction of the Polish–Lithuanian urban and agricultural infrastructure during the period of the wars was massive. It is not possible to provide general figures for the destruction as a whole, which also varied greatly from place to place, even within a single locality. In the locations most severely hit, destruction of property and drops in crop yield reached 90 percent. With the end of the wars, the economy was in dire need of reconstruction – a process that posed significant challenges. Despite the best efforts of the king, Jan III Sobieski (who ruled from 1674 to 1696), Poland's centralized state apparatus was not strong enough to undertake the task, so it fell to the upper rank of the nobility, the magnates who held seats in the Senate, to undertake it. Their huge *latifundia* provided a sound enough base from which to begin the process, which took many decades to complete, particularly because it was interrupted by a further round of destruction caused by the Great Northern War (1702–20).

[23] Sh. Ettinger, "Ḥelkam shel ha-Yehudim ba-Kolonizatziyah shel Ukraina' (1569–1648)" [The Role of Jews in the Colonization of the Ukraine (1569–1648)], *Zion* 21 (1956), 107–42.

[24] Y. Raba, "Gzeirot Taḥ-taṭ: Ha-Hitraḥashut u-Mashma'utah," in I. Bartal and I. Gutman, eds., *Kiyum va-Shever: Yehudei Polin le-Doroteihem*, vol. I (Jerusalem, 1997), 179–91.

[25] M. Nadav, *The Jews of Pinsk, 1506–1880*, trans. M. Rosman and F. Tropper (Stanford, 2008), 141–92.

The major obstacle to be overcome by the magnates in these years was the changing structure of the European economy in the seventeenth century. The very positive terms of trade for Polish grain exports in its early decades had begun to change in the 1620s and 1630s, and dropped rapidly in the second half of the century as western and central Europe exploited the end of the Thirty Years' War to reorganize their own agricultural base. In order to create the wealth they needed for economic rebuilding, the magnates had to find new markets for their own agricultural produce. The solution they reached was to exploit their own subjects as far as possible by developing local markets – a development in which Jews would play a number of key roles.[26]

Local markets were created by means of a network of small towns spread out across the eastern regions of the Commonwealth. Jews were invited to these settlements in large numbers in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to help reconstruct and run the markets. In many, they eventually formed the majority of the population, giving urban society in these small towns (called, in Yiddish, *shtetlakh*), a distinctly Jewish flavor. Jews made up the majority – and often the totality – of merchants, moving into the houses around the market square, which had previously been forbidden them. The non-Jewish population concentrated on crafts, with many making their living from the land. In most cases, the trade done was purely local, with the goal of increasing the volume of agricultural turnover from the magnate estates.

In fact, the major growth sector in the eighteenth century seems to have been in the sale of alcohol, also dominated by Jews. Since this was largely made from rye grown by the magnates, the local market in the small towns and villages was a crucial means for them to sell their own produce. It was squeezed increasingly heavily during the eighteenth century, as will become clear in the next section.[27]

As a result of these developments, connections with regional, national, and international markets were not highly developed except in the largest towns, such as Brody, making local trade increasingly stagnant. One exception to this rule was perhaps the trade in cloth, both Polish and foreign, which was dominated by Jewish merchants, with women particularly prominent. Another was the trade with Hungary. Since the reabsorption of

[26] M. Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate–Jewish Relations in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); A. Teller, *Money, Power, and Influence in Eighteenth-Century Lithuania: The Jews on the Radziwiłł Estates* (Stanford, 2016).

[27] G. Hundert, *The Jews in a Polish Private Town: The Case of Opatów in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1992), 46–68.

Ottoman Hungary into the Habsburg possessions in 1696, its trade with Poland had begun to flourish. In the eighteenth century, enterprising Jewish merchants crossed the Carpathian mountains on a regular basis, buying wines in Hungary to sell to the Polish nobility on their return.

As the number of Jews in Poland–Lithuania grew, particularly in the eighteenth century, crafts became increasingly popular. Small but significant numbers took up, among other things, metalworking, carpentry, carting, and the manufacture of potash and gunpowder, as well as candles. The choice of these last (and similar) professions seems to have been dictated by the fact that the Polish practitioners of these crafts were not, on the whole, organized into powerful guilds and so could not resist the Jews. This unwillingness to enter into unnecessary conflict with the Christian guilds might also have been the reason why so few took up shoemaking in the eighteenth century. Wherever possible, Jews tried either to join Christian guilds, by founding a special Jewish section, or to obtain the right to set up their own. The numbers of such Jewish guilds only grew significantly toward the end of the century.[28]

It is claimed that in the field of tailoring the Jews were responsible for the adoption of the retail of ready-made clothes, and that they also developed a primitive form of putting-out, whereby Jewish merchants provided craftsmen with raw material which they paid them to work. In another eighteenth-century development, Jews also began to take an interest in the development of manufactures in Great Poland, though they did not play a significant role in this field before the end of the century. On the whole, though, the thrust of their economic activity here, as in other fields, seems to have been more in the direction of adjustment to existing conditions than in radically changing them.[29]

This can be seen in attitudes toward monopolies. The growth of the Jewish population in the eighteenth century meant that increasingly large numbers of Jewish merchants in these *shtetlakh* were competing for a share in a small market, which led to fierce internal competition. In response, the Jewish communities adopted exactly the same kind of economic monopolies that they had tried to avoid in the royal towns of the sixteenth century. Competition with non-Jews was much less problematic in the small towns, since the Jews, with the support of the magnates, held a

[28] M. Horn, "The Chronology and Distribution of Jewish Craft Guilds in Old Poland," in A. Polonsky, J. Basista, and A. Link-Lenczowski, eds., *The Jews in Old Poland, 1000–1795* (London, 1993), 249–66.

[29] M. Wischnitzer, *A History of Jewish Crafts and Guilds* (New York, 1965); J. Goldberg, "Manufaktura żelazna księdza Kazimierza Lipskiego i Szlamy Efraimowicz w Choczu (iniciatywy gospodarcze Żydów w XVIII wieku)," in J. Topolski and K. Modelski, eds., *Żydzi w Wielkopolsce na przestrzeni dziejów* (Poznań, 1995), 83–99.

monopoly on trade. Magnate support also helped the Jews to deal with the competition of non-Jews in the larger royal towns.[30] Increasing numbers of Jews moved into the magnate-owned *jurydiki* enclaves, which meant that the town councils were largely powerless to stop them engaging in whatever economic activity they wanted. This caused a great deal of resentment, which came to a head in Warsaw in 1776. Though the city had a privilege *De Non Tolerandis Judaeis*, many Jews lived in the myriad *jurydiki* there. When the magnate August Sułkowski established a new *jurydika*, Nowa Jerozolima ("New Jerusalem"), in which to settle Jews, enraged townspeople sued him and took to the streets until it was abandoned and destroyed.[31]

The Jews' dominance in local and regional trade was not mirrored in the international markets during the eighteenth century. They did not count amongst the wealthiest merchants in the Commonwealth and found difficulty competing with other minority ethnic groups, such as Italians, Germans, Scots, and Armenians. However, this did not mean that the Jews ceased to play a role in Poland's export trade. Data from the international markets in Gdańsk, Königsberg, and Leipzig in this period demonstrate clearly that the Jews formed a significant proportion of the Polish–Lithuanian merchants trading there, though they were not on the whole the largest dealers. Jewish participation in international trade was encouraged by the magnates, who exploited the Jews' mercantile activity as a source of income, either through indirect taxation or through charging Jewish merchants for space on river flotillas bringing goods to the important Baltic markets.[32]

The Jews' economic contacts outside Poland included Russia, Hungary, and western Europe, but focused mainly on the German lands, particularly Prussia and Saxony, where their participation in the great Leipzig fair grew enormously in the last decades of the eighteenth century. The significance of the German trade would seem to have been that the Polish and

[30] J. Goldberg, "Ha-Misḥar ha-Kimona'i ha-Yehudi be-Polin ba-Me'ah ha-18: Takanot la-Ḥenvanim be-Zaslav u-ve-Brody ve-She'elat ha-Mekorot ha-Ivri'm-ha-Polani'im le-Toledot ha-Misḥar ve-ha-Ḥevrah ha-Yehudi'im," [Jewish Retail Trade in the Polish Commonwealth in the Eighteenth Century – Regulations of Stallkeepers in Zaslaw and Brody and the Question of Polish-Hebrew Sources Relating to the History of Jewish Trade and Society], in E. Mendelsohn and Ch. Shmeruk, eds., *Kovetz Meḥkarim 'al Yehudei Polin: Sefer le-Zikhro Shel Paul Glikson* (Jerusalem, 1987).

[31] K. Zieńkowska, "Spór o Nową Jerozolimę," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 93 (1986) 351–76.

[32] G. Hundert, "The Role of the Jews in Commerce in Early Modern Poland–Lithuania," *Journal of European Economic History* 16 (1987), 245–57; M. Rosman, "Ha-Yehudim be-Saḥar ha-Neharot mi-Darom-Mizraḥ Polin le-Gdansk (1695–1726) shel Mishpaḥat Magnaṭim 'Aḥat" [The Jews in the River Trade from South-Eastern Poland to Gdansk (1695–1726)], *Gal-Ed* 7–8 (1985), 70–83.

Lithuanian Jewish merchants were acting as suppliers of agricultural produce and cloth for the Court Jews of central Europe. Poland–Lithuania's political and legal structure did not allow for the development of Court Jews there in the strictest sense of the term, though a number of Jews acted as agents or "factors" for the magnates and even the royal court, fulfilling some of the functions of the Court Jews and becoming very wealthy along the way. Prominent among them was Szmul Zbytkower, who became purveyor to the Polish and Prussian courts in the 1760s and 1770s, soon also taking on the role as provisioner to the Polish and Russian armies (at the same time!). Zbytkower was also part of a Europe-wide network of wealthy Jewish financiers, which stretched from Amsterdam to Warsaw, and made a great deal of money for its members from banking and trade.[33]

THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

While agricultural production was the mainstay of the early modern European economy as a whole, and of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in particular, Jews were traditionally excluded from it by the legal restrictions on their owning land. Despite this, Jews in the early modern period managed to penetrate to the heart of the agricultural economy, particularly in the eastern regions, by indirect means. The roots of this development may be found in two major economic shifts that occurred in the sixteenth century.

The first was the development of the early modern manorial economy: in response to the decline of the overland Asian trade following the fall of Constantinople and a growing market for grain in central Europe, Poland focused its energies on increased agricultural production, much of which was exported from its major Baltic port of Gdańsk. Grain production, which was very labor-intensive, was organized around an intensification of peasant feudal labor rather than a move to money rents. This led to the spread of noble landed estates, where, in return for their own small farms, the peasants worked a set number of days on the estate-owner's farm (Polish: *folwark*). The issue of marketing the agricultural produce was left in the hands of the nobleman, who often used Jews to help in the process, particularly by taking leases of different kinds.[34]

[33] E. Ringelblum, "Shmuel Zbitkover: 'Askan Tsiburi Kelali be-Polin bi-Yemei Ḥalukatah," *Zion* 3 (1938), 246–66, 337–55; C. Aust, "Commercial Cosmopolitanism: Networks of Jewish Merchants between Warsaw and Amsterdam, 1750–1820" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

[34] On the system as a whole, see W. Kula, *An Economic Theory of the Feudal System* (London, 1987).

One of the most common forms in the sixteenth century was the leasing of entire estates or parts thereof by Jewish businessmen, either individually or in consortia. Jews went into this field as a result of the second major economic shift of the time – a long period of inflation and monetary devaluation, often called "the price revolution." In those conditions, their medieval occupation of moneylending became increasingly unprofitable. In additional, legal restrictions on Jews possessing land made it difficult for them, when noblemen defaulted on mortgages, to take possession of the estates put up as security. To solve these problems, instead of giving mortgages on estates, Jews would lease the lands for a given term, usually 3 years. In return for an upfront payment, the Jewish businessman would take control of the estate as a leaseholder, managing it as best he could. The incomes he made were supposed to return his initial investment, with any monies he made beyond the initial payment counting as his profit on the deal.[35]

The logic of the system lay in the fact that, to increase his profit, the leaseholder (Polish: *arendarz*) would have a vested interest in managing the estate as efficiently as possible in order to boost his incomes. For the Jews, its outcome was that they found themselves working as managers in Poland's hugely profitable agricultural economy – a sector from which they had been excluded for centuries. Beyond that, as leaseholders of estates, they took the place of the noble owners, even occupying manor houses and ruling subject populations. This was a rise in social status unheard of in European Jewish history until then.

Jewish leaseholders managed their estates by dividing them into parcels (individual regions, towns, or villages) and leasing these to family members, friends, and business connections, which meant that many less wealthy Jews became involved in the agricultural economy, too. This was a development viewed favorably by Jewish society, which had become increasingly wary of economic connections with the king and the royal court: the Council of Four Lands, Polish Jewry's parliamentary body, outlawed leasing many royal incomes in 1580, because it feared that this would bring the Jews into competition with the lower nobility. Business dealings with the magnates, on the other hand, posed no such problem – largely because the magnates themselves were very interested in exploiting the Jews' financial acumen.[36]

Poland's colonization of Ukraine, following its annexation to the Crown in 1569, was achieved by, among other things, extending the manorial

[35] Ettinger, "Ḥelkam shel ha-Yehudim."

[36] Halperin, ed., *Pinkas Va'ad Arba Ha'aratzot*, 1–2, no. 1; J. Kalik, "Szlachta Attitudes towards Jewish Arenda in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Gal-Ed* 14 (1995), 15–25.

system to the very fertile steppe region. This gave the Jews a significant role in one of Europe's major early modern geo-political developments as well as many new economic opportunities. Large numbers of Jews settled in Ukraine in the years until 1648.[37]

Ukraine's huge territory and its distance from the rivers which connected the Polish hinterland with Gdańsk and the Baltic markets meant that much more emphasis had to be put there on selling grain on the home market. The economic tool that allowed this was the estate-owners' monopoly right on the production and sale of alcohol (Polish: *propinacja*). Subjects were forbidden to consume alcohol from any source other than the estate-owners' taverns. On some estates, the amount of alcohol which subjects – particularly peasants – had to drink was also determined as part of their feudal dues. Taverns became a major source of revenue and soon formed an important part of estate leases. Jews became prominent as tavern keepers, preferred over non-Jewish competitors for their relatively high levels of literacy, numeracy, and marketing skills. The more Jews took leases of entire estates, the more they leased out the taverns on them to other Jews, so strengthening this trend.

The move to tavern keeping as a profession not only provided Jews with good incomes in the small towns of Ukraine, it also led them to settle in many villages where there were taverns. In these situations, one or two Jewish families would often move out of their urban community to settle in a village tavern, far distant from the nearest Jewish settlement. In such a situation, both men and women had to play an active role in running the family business – often supplementing their income from the sale of alcohol by tending a market garden, given them as part of their lease. On occasion, local peasants would have to look after the garden as part of their feudal labor duties, though this was extremely unpopular. In cases where the husband died during the period of the lease, the widow would often claim the right to continue running the tavern until the contract expired, which led to some halakhic controversy. Due to stiff competition for these profitable leases, it seems to have been quite rare for the same family to hold one for more than a single 3-year term, which meant that no stable Jewish village population developed. Nonetheless, the figure of the Jewish tavern keeper became a recognizable feature of Polish–Lithuanian village life in the early modern period.[38]

The Jews' move into the field of leaseholding, which was a totally new phenomenon, posed a number of cultural and, especially, religious problems to the Jewish society of the day. Prominent among these was the

[37] Ettinger, "Ḥelkam shel ha-Yehudim."
[38] J. Goldberg, *Ha-Ḥevrah ha-Yehudit ba-Mamlekhet Polin-Lita'* (Jerusalem, 1999), 232–50.

issue of Sabbath observance. Once the Jews began to form an integral part of the non-Jewish economic system, their desire to stop working (or, in fact, making income of any kind) on their Sabbath posed a significant problem, since both their employers and their customers viewed it as a normal workday. The rabbinic elite was forced to consider questions such as how Jews leasing estates could have peasants fill their labor dues on Saturdays, as giving them an extra holiday would cause significant economic losses. Lessees of individual taverns, which were often the only places where villagers could buy a drink, faced not only economic losses if they closed on Friday nights but also an angry clientele. Though rabbinic regulations from the turn of the seventeenth century found solutions to many of these problems, some could not be dealt with within the framework of Jewish law. Since leaseholding continued to be extremely popular, many Jewish businessmen may have found their own personal ways of dealing with the issue.[39]

As the Polish regime in Ukraine became more brutal in the first half of the seventeenth century, the Jewish leaseholders became much more unpopular. The local population rightly identified them as part of the apparatus of occupation and growing economic exploitation. To this was added a stiff dose of religious hatred: the Jews were seen not just as Christianity's traditional enemies, but also as allies of the Catholic nobility, which was hostile to the local Orthodox Church. A particular bone of contention was the fact that, as estate leaseholders, Jews held positions of power over Christian peasants. This was felt to be a violation of the "proper" organization of society in a Christian state, where Jews were supposed to be kept in a state of humiliation as a result of their rejection of Christ. So, when Khmelnytsky's Cossack rebellion of 1648 turned into a huge popular uprising in Ukraine, it was not just the nobility but the Jews who became major targets. Thousands were massacred and many more either taken captive to be sold as slaves or forced to flee.[40]

On the whole, both Jews and nobility seem to have recognized that they shared a common interest in the face of a common foe. This did little to alleviate the Jews' terrible suffering of the war years, in which whole communities were devastated, but became extremely significant in the period of reconstruction which followed, when efforts were made to revitalize the Commonwealth's agricultural economy. Exigencies of scale meant that almost the only group able to undertake this task were the

[39] H. H. Ben-Sasson, "Takkanot 'Issurei-Shabbat shel Polin u-Mashmaʿutan ha-Ḥevratit ve-ha-Kalkalit" [Sabbath Prohibition Ordinances of Poland and their Social and Economic Significance], *Zion* 21 (1956), 183–206.

[40] Raba, "Gzeirot Taḥ-Taṭ," 179–91.

magnates, who faced major problems not only in reconstructing destroyed infrastructure, but also in dealing with declining terms of trade for Polish–Lithuanian grain exports on the international market. The Jewish leaseholders, by now trusted financial managers, played a crucial role in helping them to overcome the difficulties they faced.[41]

A similar situation developed during the eighteenth century in Hungary, where Jewish entrepreneurs helped local magnates develop their estates and improve incomes from the seigneurial economy. It is perhaps little surprise, then, that in these years an increasing number of Jews from the Commonwealth chose to settle there, revivifying a Jewish community that had declined drastically during the period of the Ottoman conquest.[42]

In the Commonwealth, the magnates began to consolidate further their economic and social position by absorbing into their huge *latifundia* smaller estates owned by noble families of local standing. Though this further enriched the magnates, it created a large group of *déclassé* noblemen, with no means of living. In order to alleviate this problem and ensure their political loyalty, the magnates often leased them parts of their *latifundia*, thus giving them the status of squires and the position of clients. Since the nobility were not noted for their entrepreneurial or managerial skills, this meant that estate leasing, which had been a major engine for economic growth before 1648, now increasingly became a social and political institution. Estate income would need to be developed in a different way.

Developments in Jewish society provided a key. The experience of the peasant uprising of 1648 had taught the Jews that leasing whole estates, which gave them the de facto status of estate-owners and control over the peasants, tended to bring religious and ethnic tensions to boiling point. Leasing only seigneurial rights (such as the right of *propinacja*) did not put the Jews in positions of direct authority over the peasant population, and so neutralized much of the religious hostility. On the other hand, it still brought the Jews the benefits of economic contact with magnates, and allowed the latter to transform the leases of these rights into a key means of increasing their income. As a result, Jewish businessmen increasingly left estate leases to the upper and middling nobility, moving en masse into leasing the right of *propinacja* and other estate monopolies.[43]

[41] Teller, *Money, Power, and Influence*, 107–44.

[42] R. Gates, "Eighteenth-Century Schutzherren: Esterhazy Patronage of the Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 47 (1985), 189–208; H. Lupovich, "Jews and the Zichy Estate: A Case Study in Magnate–Jewish Relations," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 7 (2008), 15–37.

[43] Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 106–42.

The rising price of vodka meant that producing it became an ever more profitable business. Estate-owners began to build more taverns on their estates, while increasing the prices of the leases, and they continued to do so throughout the eighteenth century, particularly in the eastern and southern regions of the Commonwealth. A growing number of Jews seized the economic opportunity and moved to the villages to lease and run these taverns. So widespread was this movement, that the 1764/5 census of Polish Jewry noted that nearly a third of the population lived in the villages, with that number rising in the Podlasie region to above 50 percent! As in the previous period, however, stiff competition for these profitable leases, among other things, meant that the village population of Jews was constantly changing.[44]

It is important to note that *propinacja* was not the only seigneurial right belonging to the estate-owners. Others included milling grain, the collection of customs and tolls, and local fishing rights. On the magnate *latifundia*, which were composed of a number of estates, all the rights on a single estate were often leased out together in a single package called a "general *arenda*." These could be extremely expensive and were taken only by the wealthiest individuals or consortia. Those who leased the general *arenda* were effectively in control of much of the magnate's moneymaking apparatus on the estate and so enjoyed his full support. This could find its expression in, among other things, exemption from various aspects of communal jurisdiction, support in all legal proceedings concerned in running their business, and even the supply of soldiers to help collect bad debts from Jews and non-Jews alike. These leaseholders therefore formed part of a new elite in Jewish society, whose development was based more on success in dealing with the non-Jewish world and less on the traditional values of learning and lineage.[45]

Though it was obviously important for these leaseholders to have financial means at their disposal, the new type of leases did not demand an immediate capital outlay. Unlike the estate leases of the previous period, where the price of the lease had to paid in full at the outset, in the eighteenth century the initial payments were not large. Instead, the magnate preferred to save him or herself the administrative headache of collecting and storing the money in some kind of central treasury by

[44] R. Mahler, *Yidn in amolikn Poyln in likht fun tsifern* (Warsaw, 1958).

[45] A. Teller, "Ḥakhirah Kelalit ve-Ḥokher Kelali be-'Aḥuzot bet Radzivil ba-Me'ah ha-Shemonah-'Esreh," [General Arenda and General Arendarz on the Radziwiłł Estates in Eighteenth-Century Lithuania], in R. Aharonson and S. Stampfer, eds., *Yazamut Yehudit ba-'Et ha-Ḥadashah: Mizraḥ 'Eiropah ve-'Eretz Yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 2001), 48–78. Cf. A. Kaźmierczyk, *Żydzi w dobrach prywatnych* (Kraków, 2002), 135–56.

leaving it with the leaseholder who distributed it gradually on receipt of payment orders from him.

These payment orders, which were used in many branches of the Polish economy, functioned like modern checks given in lieu of cash by the magnate to third parties who, in this case, presented them to the leaseholders for immediate payment. This system was particularly advantageous for the Jewish businessmen because it meant that payment of the lease could often be made out of current income rather than from standing capital. In fact, the payment order system marked a significant change in the nature of leaseholding: from being a form of moneylending, as it had been in previous centuries, it had now become a form of loan, with the leaseholder able to enjoy the fruits of the lease before he had to make any payment. As we have seen, the movement from moneylending to borrowing marked the development of Jewish trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so this development in the field of leasing may be viewed as a continuation of that trend.

These rich general leaseholders formed only a small proportion of all the leaseholders in the eighteenth century, and were to be found just on the great magnate *latifundia*. The vast majority of leaseholders were much poorer individuals who eked out a living managing a single tavern in a small town or village. The village tavern functioned as the local shop, where the peasants could buy items for their own use without having to visit the town. The tavern keepers would also sometimes purchase the peasants' grain surplus in order to trade in it themselves. In addition, they acted as a source of credit for their clientele by lending money on pawn (the sale of alcohol on credit was, however, restricted by the estate-owners). Their role can therefore be characterized as facilitating the connections between the village and the local market, thus creating the financial conditions in the countryside which the estate-owner needed in order to sell vodka to the peasants.[46]

These tavern keepers often struggled to make a living. Situated far from the nearest Jewish community and with a standard of living not much above their peasant neighbors, they were exposed to maltreatment at the hands of the local nobility and clergy, and had little chance of recourse to the estate-owner. If the lease was taken from a Jewish general leaseholder, the chances of help from the estate administration were likely to be better. As the eighteenth century progressed, however, many of the richest estate-owners, in their continuing bid to increase profits, decided to do away with the middleman and abolish the general leases. This gave the magnates even greater leverage over the smaller leaseholders, and meant that the position

[46] J. Goldberg, "Żyd a karczma wiejska w XVIII wieku," *Wiek Oświecenia* 9 (1993), 205–13.

of the poor Jews could become extremely precarious – particularly as they and their families could be arrested for late or non-payment of dues. The Jewish popular memory and the non-Jewish memoir literature of the age portray these tavern keepers as living in a state of terrible degradation: ignorant, venal, and grasping for every penny – even at the expense of keeping the laws of their religion, such as Sabbath observance.

Nonetheless, the system did not break down before the end of the eighteenth century. Even the attempts of the reformist Sejm of 1768 to reinvigorate the economy and expel the Jews from the villages did not change the situation significantly. Despite all the political, social, and economic pressures, the magnates do not, in the end, seem to have lost sight of the fact that they derived much of their wealth from an economic system of which the Jews formed a mainstay. They would not allow it to be changed.

The period of the partitions brought no significant change. Though social reformers in ethnic Poland, as well as the Austrian and Russian partitions, continued to call for an end to Jewish tavern keeping, change on the ground was not forthcoming. Even the very hostile report on conditions in the villages of Belarus prepared by the Russian Senator Gavriil Dzerzhavin, and the subsequent statutes issued by the Tsarist regime in 1804, had little effect on the ground.[47]

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

The basic role of Jewish communal organizations was the social, economic, and religious administration of Jewish society. This was a function it performed on two levels: since pre-modern European society was based on the concept of "estates" (here meaning self-organizing social groups or classes), the Jewish communal bodies were expected by the Jews themselves to regulate their own society. This was, of course, a function with roots stretching back to antiquity.[48] On a different level, the polities in which the Jews lived expected Jewish institutions to help Jewish society to function as part of the general social and economic system of the country. In the medieval period, this was largely concerned with helping to collect tax from Jews. With the expansion and strengthening of the state in the early modern period, more was expected of the communities, so their role vis-à-vis non-Jewish society grew and developed. This process was particularly

[47] See J. Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the Jewish Question in Russia, 1772–1825* (DeKalb, IL, 1986), 95–115.

[48] Y. Baer, "The Origins of Jewish Communal Organization in the Middle Ages," *Binah* 1 (1989), 59–82.

intense in Poland–Lithuania due not only to the rapid growth of the Jewish population there, but also to its remarkable penetration of the Polish–Lithuanian economy.

At the beginning of the early modern period, however, largely medieval patterns seem to have been followed, with the king appointing three wealthy Jews to collect Polish Jewry's taxes in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Community rabbis were ordered to support them by threatening recalcitrant Jewish taxpayers with the *ḥerem* ("excommunication ban"). This does not seem to have been a very efficient system, so, by the 1520s, Jewish communal bodies had begun to persuade the king that they would be better able to collect the Jews' taxes than individual members of the social elite. By taking on the responsibility of collecting state taxes from their members and passing them on to the non-Jewish authorities, the communities strengthened their legal position in the state (not to mention their authority over Jewish society) by acting as part of the general administrative apparatus. It probably also enabled them to increase their internal tax revenue.[49]

The local Jewish communities soon became sophisticated economic institutions, collecting and disbursing large amounts of money, quite apart from state taxes. Their incomes were based primarily on a capital tax paid by each householder, with another important source of income being philanthropic donations, often made through the synagogues. Each community had a number of synagogue treasurers (Hebrew: *gabbaim*) who collected these funds, which were used to support the local Jewish welfare system. As the women's role in Jewish economic (and synagogue) life grew, female treasurers (Yiddish: *gabbetes*) were also appointed with the responsibility of collecting donations from Jewish women. The disbursement of these funds, however, remained firmly in male hands. Other communal income came from bequests and loans made to the community by wealthy individuals, as well as loans contracted from the Polish noblemen, who wanted to exploit the Jews' economic expertise. These were re-invested at higher rates of return, and the profits subsumed into the working budget.[50]

Communal expenditures were used largely for paying non-Jewish officials and members of the clergy to ensure a positive attitude toward the communities. Salaries were paid to the communal rabbi, doctor, cantors,

[49] A. Teller, "The Laicization of Jewish Society: The Polish Communal Rabbinate in the 16th Century," in M. Graetz, ed., *Schoepferische Momente des europaeischen Judentums, 16.–18. Jh* (Heidelberg, 2000), 333–49.

[50] M. Balaban, "Ma'amad ha-Ḥuki shel ha-Yehudim ve-'Irgunam," [The Legal Status of Jews and their Organizations], in I. Halperin, ed., *Beit Yisrael be-Polin*, vol. I (Jerusalem, 1948), 44–65.

preachers, wardens, and *shtadlan* – the community's lobbyist with non-Jewish authorities. Jewish communities had a relatively sophisticated system of welfare aimed at helping the local poor, including, for example, raising dowries for poor girls who wanted to marry. A certain amount of money went to the upkeep of communal infrastructure – cleaning and repairing roads, fire prevention, ensuring the water supply – as well as the building and upkeep of the synagogue, the *mikveh* ("ritual bath"), the *hekdesh* ("hospital/poor-house"), and cemetery. The other major capital expenses came when the community was threatened with violence, as in blood libel cases where Jews were accused of murdering Christian children. Intercession with the authorities, as well as lengthy trials, could be an enormous burden on the community budgets.[51]

On the other hand, the role of tax collector actually encouraged the growth and sophistication of Jewish autonomous institutions. During the sixteenth century, groups of communities in individual regions banded together to collect state taxes on a regional basis, forming regional councils, which took on a certain amount of legislative responsibility for the region as a whole. In a further development, when King Stefan Batory needed extra funds for his war against the Muscovite state in 1580, he re-imposed the Jewish poll tax, which was farmed by representatives of Jewish communities from four regions within the Commonwealth: Great Poland, Little Poland, Red Ruthenia, and Volhynia. From this action was born the so-called Council of Four Lands, a Polish-Jewish parliamentary body, which not only collected the poll tax but represented all the Jews of Poland before the non-Jewish authorities, and also legislated on matters which touched Jewish society in general. The 1628 bankrupcy regulations mentioned above are a case in point.[52]

In the latter part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the changing demographic structure of the Jewish population significantly affected the local communities' economic roles. The rapid growth in the number of Jews was not matched by a similar growth in the resources at their disposal, so the tax burden on richer community members constantly increased. In addition, the move of a significant number of Jews to the villages, where it was difficult for the community authorities to reach them, shrank the communal budget. Wealthy Jews who leased the right to

[51] The budget of the Poznań community for 1638 can be found in B. Weinryb, ed., *Texts and Studies in the Communal History of Polish Jewry* (New York, 1950), 57–60 (Hebrew pagination), no. 138; A. Michałowska-Mycielska, *The Jewish Community: Authority and Social Control in Poznań and Swarzędz, 1650–1793* (Wrocław, 2008), 197–227.

[52] J. Goldberg, "The Jewish Sejm: Its Origins and Functions," and S. Ettinger, "The Council of the Four Lands," both in Polonsky *et al.*, eds., *The Jews in Old Poland*, 147–65 and 93–109, respectively.

propinacja often managed to evade communal taxes with the help of the magnate, who was interested in receiving as much of their income for himself as he could and was less concerned with the communities' problems in balancing their books. This further weakened the communities' ability to honor their financial commitments.[53]

Moreover, the demands on the communal budget did not decrease with the years. Expenditures on bribery in the face of the blood libel and violence continued to grow and, on the magnate estates, demands for communities to make cash payments became more common. In that setting, Jewish communities often formed part of the administrative web which covered the estates, as the noble estate-owner adopted an ever more aggressive policy of squeezing the inhabitants. Since the communities played a significant role in this process regarding Jewish society, they enjoyed a certain degree of support from the owner, but were expected in return to fulfill various functions for him or her. Among these was the supply of ready cash or financial services whenever the owner needed them. Thus, the communities could on occasion be subject to special imposts. More frequently, they were used to change money at artificially high rates or were forced to buy various goods from the owner at high prices when the market was in a slump.[54]

In order to continue functioning, the communities developed new economic strategies. The first was to adopt a form of indirect taxation – the *kropka*. This was a parallel to the introduction of the Polish *akcyza* tax on meat sales, which was widely adopted as part of the reconstruction effort after the seventeenth-century wars. Thus, in the later part of the century, the *kropka* on the sale of kosher meat began to appear in Jewish communal budgets, while later a new *kropka* – on all business transactions – was also adopted. By the eighteenth century, the *kropka* formed a major source of tax income for the communities.[55]

The second means of balancing the communal budget at this period involved a change in the forms of loans contracted by Jewish communities. Instead of taking money from Polish noblemen to reinvest, they took loans from Church institutions and ploughed the money directly into the

[53] G. Hundert, "Ha-Kehillah be-Polin ba-Me'ah ha-18: 'Aspekṭim Shonim" [The Jewish Community in Poland in the Eighteenth Century: Various Aspects], in I. Bartal, ed., *Kahal Yisra'el: Ha-Shilṭon ha-'Atzmi ha-Yehudi le-Dorotav* (Jerusalem, 2004), 43–52.

[54] Teller, *Money, Power, and Influence*, 43–60.

[55] B. Weinryb, "Kavim le-Toledot ha-Kalkalah ve-ha-Finansim shel ha-Yehudim ba-'Arei Polin ve-Liṭa' ba-Me'ot ha-17–ha-18" [Outlines of Jewish Economic and Financial History in Polish and Lithuanian Towns during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries], in Weinryb, ed., *Meḥḳarim u-Meḳorot le-Toldot Yisrael ba-'Et ha-Ḥadashah* (Jerusalem, 1976), 90–113.

communal budget. There seem to have been two main reasons for this change. First, many nobles bequeathed the debts owed them by the communities to the Church. In addition, the Church institutions, which had a superabundance of cash income and little to do with it, sought a secure form of investment. This they found in the form of the *wyderkaf* loan to the Jewish communities. This kind of investment, which was usually secured by some form of real estate (often the local synagogue), was something in the nature of a standing loan, in which the borrower, in return for not ever having to return the capital, guaranteed to pay a fixed rate of simple interest to the creditor in perpetuity. It was generally fixed at the low annual rate of 7 percent.[56]

Very many communities enthusiastically began taking on loans of this sort to help with reconstruction costs following the wars (particularly the Great Northern War), and also to finance major investment projects, such as building new synagogues. Eventually, the capital sums they owed (on paper, at least, for they were largely not expected to return the capital) reached astronomical figures, and further loans had to be taken on a regular basis to help make the interest payments. Despite this, the system seemed on the whole to work, since creditors continued to be willing to lend and the communities to pay the interest.

Though it has been claimed that these loans tended to pauperize the communities, this does not seem to have been the case. Problems only arose when an individual community (such as Lublin in the early eighteenth century) proved unable to make its interest payments over a significant number of years. In a case of this sort, the creditors would seize the real-estate security (i.e. the synagogue) and the communal authorities would enter into negotiations in order to restructure their debts. This done, the community would continue to function normally, with the exception that it was naturally unable to attract new creditors to help inflate its budget.[57] On the other hand, the system established the communities as a kind of banking institution in the Polish economy, improving their social standing. In addition, being in debt to Church institutions could work to their advantage

[56] J. Kalik, "Patterns of Contact between the Catholic Church and the Jews in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth: The Jewish Debts," in A. Teller, ed., *Studies on the History of the Jews in Old Poland*, Scripta Hierosolomitana 38 (Jerusalem, 1998), 102–22; Kalik, "'Hafkadah ve-Viderkaf be-Pe`ilutam ha-Kalkalit shel Yehudei Mamlekhet Polin-Liṭa'" ["Zastaw" [Deposit] and "Wiederkauf" in the Economic Activity of the Jews in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth], in Aharonson and Stampfer, eds., *Yazamut yehudit*, 25–47.

[57] M. Rosman, "The Indebtedness of the Lublin Kahal in the 18th Century," in Teller, ed., *Studies on the History of the Jews in Old Poland*, 166–83.

as the clerical authorities now had very good reason to be concerned that no harm came to the Jews despite their heretical faith!

The Jewish regional councils also took on new economic functions in this period. Rather than farming or collecting the Jewish poll tax for the state authorities, they acted more as accountants to the Treasury. Once the Council of Four Lands had negotiated with the relevant officials the overall size of the tax (it remained fixed from 1717 to 1764), the regional councils met to deliberate on its division, providing a key detailing which community was to pay how much. This led to a great deal of rivalry and political maneuvering within the councils, with each community trying to lighten its own tax burden at the expense of the others. Since the Jews' taxes were earmarked to pay the army, the state Treasury did not collect the poll tax itself, but issued payment orders to the individual units, who collected the money themselves in lieu of salaries and expenses. Thus it was that the Jewish communities began to play a direct role in army financing, too.[58]

The councils' move away from independent tax collection on behalf of the state meant that their income was limited to what they were able to collect themselves from communities already financially hard-pressed. In this situation, the councils too moved to a budget that was based on *wyderkaf* loans in order to fund their day-to-day activities on behalf of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry, such as lobbying in Sejm and Senate, oiling the wheels of justice, and sweetening the Church authorities.

CONCLUSION: CHANGING INSTITUTIONS?

By the mid eighteenth century, it had become clear that Poland–Lithuania's path of political and economic development had seriously weakened the Commonwealth. The political power that had been concentrated in the hands of a few magnates, each pursuing his own personal interests, had prevented the development of a strong centralized state administration, which had proved so successful in central and western Europe (as well as Petrine Russia). The dominant economic policy of squeezing the home market for increased income, rather than pursuing a positive balance of trade in international markets and developing a strong productive and manufacturing base, was also having devastating effects. The European powers of Prussia, Austria, France, and Russia had long been manipulating Polish politics for their own ends, and were now beginning to consider the possibility of simply annexing Polish territory between them.[59]

[58] J. Kalik, *Scepter of Judah: Jewish Autonomy in the Eighteenth-Century Crown Poland* (Leiden, 2009).

[59] J. Lukowski, *The Partitions of Poland: 1772, 1793, 1795* (London, 1998).

Against this background, Stanisław August Poniatowski was elected king in 1764. Though he had the backing of the Russian Tsarina, Catherine, he soon began to try to develop an independent political stance with the goal of strengthening the Polish–Lithuanian economy along the lines of the new theories of the European Enlightenment. Many new policies were discussed, and some even implemented, in the first two decades of Stanisław August's reign, but it was not until the Sejm went into permanent sitting in 1788, from which it rose only in 1792, having declared a new constitution for Poland the previous year, that a sustained movement for political, economic, and social change developed. It was to involve, among other things, a radical re-alignment of the country's economic institutions – a development which, had it been successful, would have had far-reaching consequences for the Jewish population. In order to do so, however, it would have had to be supported by the all-powerful magnates, who were heavily invested in the status quo.

Perhaps the most burning issue of the age was that of agricultural productivity. As a result of the extremely heavy feudal burdens the estate-owners were giving the peasant population, its ability and motivation to increase productivity was largely non-existent. In addition, the magnates' use of *propinacja* and alcohol sales to boost their income had raised alcohol consumption to impossibly high levels, which led to further drops in productivity and even fears of widespread alcoholism. The solution was clearly to change the system of feudal obligations imposed on peasants and, by improving productivity, to reduce reliance on alcohol sales.

Such a whole-scale reform of the agricultural administration of their estates was anathema to the nobility, whose political power rendered any discussion of the matter pointless. Instead, debates focused largely on the issue of peasant drunkenness, with the finger of blame pointed firmly at the Jewish leaseholders and tavern keepers. They were accused of being of a pernicious group, which corrupted and degraded the peasantry, causing both their and the country's pauperization. Much of the policy discussions, and some legislation, such as the constitution of 1768 mentioned above, were aimed at removing the Jews from all contact with the peasants, by, among other things, expelling them from rural areas. However, since these policies failed to treat the root cause of the problem – i.e., the economic system favored by the magnate estate-owners – they proved largely ineffective. Though hostility toward the Jewish population of the estates grew, their magnate patrons would not permit any serious change in their status.[60]

[60] A. Eisenbach, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Poland, 1780–1870* (Oxford, 1991), 21–112. On the development of the Jews' role as tavern keepers in the nineteenth century, see G. Dynner, *Yankel's Tavern: Jews, Liquor, and Life in the Kingdom of Poland* (Oxford, 2013).

The situation in regard to the towns was no less complex. Urban development in the Commonwealth had lagged behind that of central and western Europe with deleterious effects on the country's economy. Once again, it was the policy adopted by the nobility of undermining urban jurisdiction which was largely to blame for the towns' inability to control their own markets and so grow. Political economists understood that the failure to develop thriving national markets was harmful in the extreme. As we have seen, Jewish merchants, whom the urban authorities wanted to exclude as far as possible from their jurisdiction, benefitted greatly from the nobles' policy, which gave them enough freedom not only to compete on equal terms with their non-Jewish competitors but also, in many cases, to drive them out of the market.

Many solutions to the urban question were proposed during the period of the Four-Year Sejm and included attempts to do away with the noble *jurydiki* enclaves in the royal towns. As part of strengthening the urban classes, the Jews in the towns were to lose their special socio-religious status, as expressed in their communal structure, and to be subordinated directly to the municipal councils. Though some of the more enlightened reformers, following the lead given by Jozef II in his 1789 legislation for the Jews of Galicia, envisaged this process as a form of emancipation, with the Jews being granted rights equal to those of their non-Jewish neighbors, both the Jewish and non-Jewish townspeople understood it as a step toward the exclusion of the Jews. Though some reforms of the Polish towns were included in the 1791 constitution, they dealt only with the royal towns. It was politically impossible to pass any legislation dealing with the situation in the private, noble-owned towns, where a great proportion of the Jewish population lived. In practice, then, the Jews' situation in the towns of the Commonwealth was not seriously harmed.[61]

The most significant changes, as far as Polish–Lithuanian Jewry were concerned, affected their own institutions – the communities and the regional councils. On his accession in 1764, Stanisław August Poniatowski started his policy of reforming the institutions of state finance by changing the structure of army funding and the ways in which the Jewish poll tax was collected. Rather than decide on the size of the tax through a process of negotiating with the Council of Four Lands, the king instituted a full census of the Jewish population in order to reach a proper determination of how many Jews should be paying. As a part of this policy, he ordered the Jewish councils disbanded. While Jewish society definitely felt this as a loss of prestige, the precise extent to which it affected Jewish

[61] E. Ringelblum, *Projekty i próby przewarstwowenia Żydów w epoce stanisławowskiej*, off-print from: *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 8 (1934).

daily life on an immediate basis is not clear. The local communities certainly continued to function as they had before.[62]

Nonetheless, the Council's abolition does seem to have had some very serious effects on the economic roles the communities could play in both Polish–Lithuanian and Jewish society. Once the councils officially ceased to exist, they had to return the 2 million or so złoties they had taken out as loans, largely from Church institutions. This proved impossible and led the Sejm to form a commission to help liquidate the debts. Moreover, once trust in the Jews' economic reliability had been damaged, demands for individual communities to repay their loans also began to grow. Since they were unable to find the astronomical sums they owed, a debt crisis developed. Though little research has been done on its consequences for the economic functioning of the Jewish communities, it was still being discussed during the Four-Year Sejm, nearly thirty years after the councils' abolition.[63] The communities' economic functioning cannot but have been seriously damaged.

It is certainly worth noting that the new social and religious institutions developed by east European Jewry at the turn of the nineteenth century – the Hasidic movement and the Lithuanian *yeshivot* – were both independent of the existing communities and developed systems of finance which were quite separate from them.

Poland's failure to get to grips with the reform of its economic institutions in the second half of the eighteenth century left it terribly weak and was one of the major contributing factors to the country's partitioning between Russia, Austria, and Prussia (in 1772, 1793, and 1795). Though, in the short term, this failure meant that the Jews continued to benefit from the economic security which magnate support brought them, this proved short-lived. The eventual fall of the Commonwealth led very many to understand the pernicious nature of the magnate economy and to view the Jews as having identified themselves with this failed system. The voices that, with the help of much traditional antisemitic argumentation, had always accused the Jews of being a group harmful to the economy now grew much stronger. They influenced the new economic ideologies of the age and so hindered the Jews' absorption into the new economic institutions which developed in nineteenth-century Congress Poland.

The Enlightenment's promise of emancipation, which would give the Jews the freedom to follow whatever economic choices they wanted as individuals, also failed to materialize there. So, while the early modern

[62] E. Lederhendler, "The Decline of the Polish–Lithuanian Kahal," *Polin* 2 (1987), 150–62.
[63] A. Eisenbach, J. Michalski, E. Rostworowski, and J. Woliński, eds., *Materiały do dziejów Sejmu Czterletniego*, vol. VI (Wrocław, 1969), 13–27, 269–71, 376, 407–8.

period was one in which the Jews were deeply integrated into Poland's economic institutions and played key roles in their development, the modern age saw the Jews increasingly excluded from them and attacked as a harmful and destructive group.[64]

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[64] M. Wodziński, "'Civil Christians': Debates on the Reform of the Jews in Poland, 1789–1830," in B. Nathans and G. Safran, eds., *Culture Front: Representing Jews in Eastern Europe* (Philadelphia, 2008), 46–76.

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CHAPTER 22

JEWISH PIETY AND DEVOTION IN EARLY MODERN EASTERN EUROPE

GLENN DYNNER

In 1945, in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, Abraham Joshua Heschel delivered a paper at the YIVO Institute in New York entitled "The Eastern European Era in Jewish History." Heschel's paper – in actuality a stirring eulogy to a recently decimated civilization – extolled east European Jewry's pervasive, erudite spirituality:

> Poor Jews sit like intellectual magnates. They possess a wealth of ideas and of knowledge, culled from little-known passages in the Talmud . . . The stomach is empty, the home overcrowded; but the heads are full of spiritual and cultural riches, and the Torah is free and ample. For recreation one goes not to the tavern, but to the House of Study.[1]

Three centuries earlier, in the wake of colossal massacres at the hands of Cossack bands led by Bogdan Khmelnytsky in 1648, the Jewish chronicler Nathan Nata Hannover had eulogized his community in a strikingly similar way:

> Throughout the dispersion of Israel there was nowhere so much learning as in the land of Poland . . . And far be it that a person miss the time of morning prayer in sleep and fail to go to the synagogue, except for unavoidable circumstances. And when he went to the synagogue, no one would depart until he heard words of Torah expounded by a scholar, or a passage from the commentary of Rashi on the Torah, the Prophets, or the Writings, or some Mishnah, or some laws, whatever he wished to study.[2]

What was most mourned, temporarily by Hannover and permanently by Heschel, was the loss of a whole culture of devotional study.

[1] Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Eastern European Era in Jewish History," in Deborah Dash Moore, ed., *East European Jews in Two Worlds: Studies from the YIVO Annual* (Evanston, 1990), 7. Heschel later elaborated on this essay in his book-length essay *The Earth is the Lord's* (New York, 1995).

[2] Nathan Nata Hannover, *Abyss of Despair* (1653), repr. in Gershon D. Hundert, in "The Love of Learning Among Polish Jews," in Lawrence Fine, ed., *Judaism in Practice: From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, 2001), 221 and 224.

Like any eulogy, these representations only impart a general disposition. Historians have complicated the picture considerably, observing deep social stratification, limits on educational opportunity, gender-based discrimination, magical and messianic belief, cases of ritual transgressions and, later, robust varieties of secularism. Nevertheless, the overall sense of scholarly piety and devotion evoked in these post-catastrophe accounts appears justified, particularly with respect to the early modern period. Home to a growing majority of the world's Jews, offering conditions of relative security, prosperity, and autonomy, eastern Europe was steadily transformed into the main center of Ashkenazic Jewish devotional "Torah" study by such figures as R. Jacob Pollak (1460–1541), R. Shalom Shakhna (d. 1558), R. Solomon Luria (1510–74), R. Moses Isserles (1525–72), R. Joel Sirkes (1561–1640), and R. Meir of Lublin (1558–1616). At the same time, preachers like R. Ephraim of Luntshitz (Łęczyca, 1550–1619), R. Tzvi Hirsch Kaidanover (d. 1712), and R. Isaiah Horowitz (1565–1630), and mystical practitioners like R. Joel Halpern (d. 1713), his grandson R. Joel Halpern II (*c.* 1690–1755), and R. Israel ben Eliezer (the Ba'al Shem Tov, *c.* 1700–60) fomented popular piety on a wide scale. Thanks to the extensive autonomy granted by the monarchs and magnates of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, culminating in the creation of a supreme internal legislative and judicial body known as the Council of Four Lands, the early modern eastern European Jewish community has been likened to a national polity whose constitution was the Torah itself.[3]

THEORY AND PRACTICE: REFLECTIONS IN ELITE-ORIENTED LITERATURE

Most Jews in eastern Europe derived from German-speaking lands, bringing with them the customs of Ashkenazic Jewry and its vernacular, Yiddish, during the Middle Ages. Members of the circle of Judah the Hasid (d. 1217), associated with *Hasidei Ashkenaz* (German Pietists), were among the first scholars of note to enter Poland; and mystical numerology (*gematria*) – a hallmark of German Pietist methodology – played an important role in later Polish kabbalistic literature.[4] But the extent to which eastern European Jewry and its rabbinic leaders absorbed their ideals of supererogatory piety, which sometimes involved spectacular feats of self-mortification and self-denial, is

[3] Gershon Hundert, "Some Basic Characteristics of the Jewish Experience in Poland," *Polin* 1 (1986), 32.

[4] Israel M. Ta-Shma, "On the History of the Jews in Twelfth- and Thirteenth- Century Poland," in Gershon D. Hundert, ed., *Polin 10: Jews in Early Modern Poland* (London, 1997), 287–317.

less certain. The publication of *Sefer Hasidim* [The Book of the Pious] in Krakow, 1581, certainly made German Pietist ideas more accessible to east European Jews, but when rendering halakhic decisions their rabbis invoked *Sefer Hasidim* sporadically and not always according to the original sense of the text. Eastern European Jewish conduct literature (*hanhaggot*), for its part, reflected a variety of influences, including the new Kabbalah emanating from Safed. Thus, while eastern European Jews took great pride in their Ashkenazic heritage, their rabbis in practice amalgamated an array of sources and charted a relatively independent course.[5]

Like most rabbinical authors, eastern European rabbis usually composed their works in Hebrew, a language that had a sacralizing function similar to that of Latin. As Judaism tended to emphasize ritual and conduct over professions of belief, however, they produced few theological tracts in comparison to works on ritual law (Halakhah), ethical self-perfection (*musar*), homiletics (*drush*), conduct literature (*hanhagot*), and practical Kabbalah. Most eastern European rabbinical literature comprised glosses on codifications of Jewish law, books of customs (*minhagim*) that enjoyed a quasi-legal status, and rabbinic responsa literature. Committed to the idea that talmudic passages must not contradict each other, the authors of these works devoted great effort to resolving apparent textual contradictions through a dialectical process known as *pilpul*. This method, introduced into the Polish *yeshivot* by R. Jacob Pollak, became a fundamental part of rabbinical training, but could be controversial when used to render actual legal decisions, especially lenient ones.[6] Codifications, as handbooks of law and ritual that had a direct bearing on day-to-day practice, could also be controversial, particularly after the invention of the printing press. Some rabbis feared that the accessibility of codifications would invite a "do-it-yourself" approach to ritual and legal determinations; others perceived a threat to distinct local customs; still others balked at the way such printed codes swept away layers of textual glosses that had accumulated over the generations. At the center of the controversy stood R. Moses Isserles (the "Rema"), author of the *Mapa* [Tablecloth], a gloss on R. Joseph Karo's Sephardic codification *Shulḥan Arukh* [Set Table] that was symptomatic of a new exposure to Sephardic works produced in far-flung

[5] Edward Fram, "German Pietism and Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Polish Rabbinic Culture," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96, 1 (2006), 50–9; Ze'ev Gries, *Sifrut ha-Hanhagot: Toldoteiha ve-Mekoma be-Ḥayyei Ḥasidi R. Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov* (Jerusalem, 1989), 41–102.

[6] Elhanan Reiner, "Temurot be-Yeshivot Polin ve-Ashkenaz ba-Me'ot ha-16–17 ve-ha-Viku'akh al Pilpul," in Israel Bartal, Hava Turnianski, and Ezra Mendelssohn, eds., *Ke-Minhag Ashkenaz ve-Polin: Sefer Yovel le-Chone Shmeruk* (Jerusalem, 1993), 20–6; Hayyim Hillel Ben Sasson, *Hagut ve-hanhaggah* (Jerusalem, 1959), 28–33.

centers of the Jewish diaspora, facilitated by printing, and enhanced by direct contact with Italian and Ottoman scholars. Yet the "Set Table" and its Ashkenazic "Tablecloth" eventually supplanted canonical medieval Ashkenazic works and unified eastern European Jewish ritual praxis.[7]

Rabbinic responsa literature – applications of halakhic reasoning to real-life cases – seems to constitute the most promising elite source for gauging common practices. Although most cases in responsa literature were exceptional (as there was no need to consult a rabbinic celebrity about an accepted norm), popular notions about propriety surfaced frequently in responsa and influenced rabbinic decision-making. As historian Edward Fram notes, R. Solomon Luria (Maharshal) ruled that one must cover one's head while eating not out of any ritual legal obligation, but in order to avoid social disapproval: rightly or wrongly, most Jews considered eating bare-headed to be a transgression and this made it unseemly, particularly for a Torah scholar. On the question of men and women interacting in the marketplace, Luria felt compelled to rule leniently because working had become so common among Jewish women. Responsa literature also brings to light cases of individual transgression, including adultery, theft, bribery, sales of non-kosher meat to fellow Jews, menstruating wives deceiving their husbands into sleeping with them, domestic violence, and even murder.[8]

Rabbis sometimes complained that communal (*kahal*) lay leaders – typically wealthy merchants – determined halakhically consequential issues without consulting them and, on occasion, overruled them. Wealthy families sometimes effectively purchased the rabbinate for their sons, despite bans against the practice by the great rabbinical figures of the day. And at the meetings of the supreme governing body of Polish Jewry, the Council of Four Lands, where the most pressing issues of the times were discussed by lay elites, rabbis initially either met separately or did not meet at all. Many rabbis, it appears, had more prestige than actual power. But lay leaders and rabbis usually shored up one another's authority and took an equally keen interest in the maintenance of public piety, for example fining or publicly shaming Sabbath violators by having them chained to the synagogue wall by their necks. Moreover, some rabbis were able to increase their presence and influence at meetings of the

[7] Reiner, "The Ashkenazi Elite: Manuscript vs. Print," in Hundert, ed., *Polin 10*, 85–98; Jacob Elbaum, *Petiḥut ve-Histagrut: ha-Yetzirah ha-Ruḥanit-ha-Sifrutit be-Polin u-be-Artzot Ashkenaz be-Shalhei ha-Me'ah ha-16* (Jersualem, 1990), ch. 1; Elbaum, "The Influence of Spanish-Jewish Culture on the Jews of Ashkenaz and Poland in the Fifteenth–Seventeenth Centuries," *Binah* 3 (1994), 179–97; Elimelekh Westreich, "The Ban on Polygamy in Polish Rabbinic Thought," in Hundert, ed., *Polin 10*, 66–84.

[8] Edward Fram, *Ideals Face Reality: Jewish Law and Life in Poland, 1550–1655* (Cincinnati, 1997), 48–105.

Council of Four Lands by the eighteenth century and obtain powerful offices that had been reserved for wealthy merchants.[9]

For the most part, eastern European Jews accepted rabbinic authority in principle. Taboos against profaning the Sabbath and festivals were such that most Jews proved willing to endure financial losses by closing their businesses on those days. Although more ritual laxity was noticed among village Jews, particularly among the growing numbers of rural tavern keepers, even the latter preferred to keep their taverns and distilleries running on Sabbaths and festivals by means of rabbinically endorsed legal fictions rather than openly flouting Sabbath restrictions. On the other extreme, certain individuals who were guilty of only involuntary crimes sought out rabbis who would assign them the most onerous penitential rites, including extended periods of penitential wandering.[10]

THE SACRED AND THE SCARED: NORMATIVE CONDUCT AND THE POPULARIZATION OF KABBALAH

Eastern European Jews primarily consulted their rabbis about Halakhah. There were other religious personnel to whom they could turn for spiritual and ethical guidance. Professional preachers were the most common sources (communal rabbis, in contrast, typically preached only twice a year); and they became more prominent in this period owing both to an increased interest in the Bible, thanks to the arrival of the first printings of Sephardic biblical commentaries, and the widespread expectation that messianic redemption, which depended upon repentance at all levels of society, was at hand. Some preachers saw themselves as akin to prophets and proved willing to endure mild persecution in order to tell powerful people what they did not want to hear. Others resorted to allegories, jokes, or dazzling talmudic virtuosity to win over audiences, techniques for which they were occasionally criticized. Less renowned itinerant preachers were

[9] Adam Teller, "Rabbis Without a Function? The Polish Rabbinate and the Council of Four Lands in the 16th–18th Centuries," in J. Wertheimer, ed., *Jewish Religious Leadership: Image and Reality* (New York, 2004), I, 371–400; Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 154–5; Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller: Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* (Oxford, 2004), 184–9; Gershon D. Hundert, *The Jews in a Polish Private Town: The Case of Opatów in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1992), 43, 71, and 130. For indications of increased rabbinic influence in the eighteenth century, see Judith Kalik, *Scepter of Judah: The Jewish Autonomy in the Eighteenth-Century Crown Poland* (Leiden, 2009).

[10] Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 63–4, Shmuel Arthur Cygielman, "Penance for Killing a Wagon Driver," in *Jewish Autonomy in Poland and Lithuania until 1648 (5408)* (Jerusalem, 1997), 343; Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller*, 221; Glenn Dynner, *Yankel's Tavern: Jews, Liquor, and Life in the Kingdom of Poland* (New York, 2013), 65–70.

sometimes derided as little more than beggars, calling to mind the dictum "the poor man's wisdom is despised" (Eccles. 9:16). However, others rose to great prominence and occupied important permanent communal positions.[11] The most successful authored books of *musar* (spiritual and ethical "self-perfection"), a popular non-halakhic genre that was typically presented in a homiletic format, since, by appearing to merely interpret biblical verses, authors could conceal their more audacious innovations.[12]

The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, formed in 1569, brought vast territories in the Ukraine and other parts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania under the control of the Polish nobility. In the ensuing colonization project, Polish landowners enserfed the local peasantry while leasing out the various enterprises on their estates – taverns, mills, tolls, and so on – to Jews. The Khmelnytsky uprising and massacres of 1648 exposed the inherent tension in this triangular relationship between Poles, Jews, and peasants. But for much of the early modern period Jews enjoyed relative prosperity and security thanks to noble patronage. The rabbis and preachers urged this process on by encouraging leaseholding and trade: anyone with initiative, some claimed, could become wealthy in Poland. R. Solomon Luria ruled leniently on the question of interest-bearing loans to fellow Jews, recognizing credit as a necessary part of doing business. Leading rabbis stressed the importance of working, supporting Torah scholars and the poor, thrift, and being wary of thieves and cheats. Often, they engaged in business themselves. Wealth was considered a deposit by God, to be scrupulously guarded and dispensed as charity.[13]

There was, however, disagreement over the theological significance of affluence. Luria, Isserles, and R. Isaiah Horowitz (1565–1630) argued that one should honor the wealthy because their affluence was a sign of divine favor. R. Ephraim of Luntshitz, in contrast, chastised the wealthy for what he saw as their greed, lust, pride, and mistreatment of the poor. Certain gentiles, he pointed out, were wealthier than any Jews – did they therefore enjoy greater divine favor, as well? On the contrary, he argued, wealth was practically worthless in comparison to good deeds and wisdom. Those who sought wealth were as dissatisfied as Tantalus, wandering from town to town on business, endangering their lives, neglecting their families, and profaning themselves. Yet R. Ephraim conceded that accumulating wealth

[11] Gries, *Sifrut ha-Hanhagot*, 3; Mendel Piekarz, *Biyemei Tzmiḥat ha-Ḥasidut* (Jerusalem, 1998), 96–172; Ben Sasson, *Hagut ve-Hanhaggah*, 42–54; Elbaum, *Hitpatḥut ve-Histagrut*, 232–47.

[12] Elbaum, *Hitptaḥut ve-Histagrut*, 232–42; Elbaum, "Aspects of Hebrew Ethical Literature in Sixteenth-Century Poland," in Bernard Dov Cooperman, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 146–66.

[13] Ben Sasson, *Hagut ve-Hanhaggah*, 55–74.

did make it possible to dispense charity and support one's poor family members.[14]

Status among Jewish clergy and lay people alike was determined by a combination of wealth, philanthropy, Torah knowledge, and familial prestige (*yiḥus*). The latter conception was comparable to aristocratic lineage in the dominant Polish society. But lacking coventional markers like land ownership and titles to nobility, Jewish familial prestige came to rely primarily on the ability to replicate the prior three qualities in as many male family members as possible, including sons-in-law. The most important of these, Torah knowledge, could not be bequeathed, but access to Torah knowledge – i.e., education – could certainly be regulated. Shaul Stampfer argues that universally available primary school (*ḥeder*) education was designed to fail so as to restrict social mobility, while still providing a minimal level of ritual knowledge and an appreciation for the difficulty involved in Torah learning. The wealthy, for their part, hired private tutors to supplement their children's education and prepare them for the inherent independence required for a *yeshiva* education. The result was a deeply stratified society. Cases in which a talented, highly motivated young man of humble origins managed to become a talmudic scholar and marry into a wealthy family were few and far between – although the possibility for social advancement through intellectual attainment was probably greater than in non-Jewish society.[15]

The education of women was usually informal and often truncated or neglected. Most women were not afforded the opportunity to attain Hebrew literacy. On the other hand, certain *musar* literature was composed exclusively for women in the Yiddish vernacular. One of the first such books, *Seder Mitzvot ha-Nashim* [Order of Women's Commandments] (Krakow, 1577) by Benjamin Slonik (*c.* 1550 – after 1620), was framed as a halakhic handbook for the three commandments for which women were specifically responsible: removing a portion of dough from *ḥallah* about to be baked (see Numbers 15:17–21), the kindling of Sabbath and festival candles, and the observance of sexual purity (*niddah*). Stern ethical rebukes are interspersed among the book's technical legal discussions. A menstruant who failed to observe sexual purity laws could bring harm to her children (section 1). Her menstrual period was penance for the original sin of Eve, who had allegedly

[14] Ibid.

[15] Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Syracuse, 2000), 170–9; Ben Sasson, *Hagut ve-Hanhaggah*, 75–129; Shaul Stampfer, "*Heder* Study, Knowledge of Torah, and the Maintenance of Social Stratification," in Stampfer, *Families, Rabbis, and Education: Traditional Jewish Society in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 2010), 145–67; Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society* (New York, 2006), 117–36.

beaten Adam until he agreed to eat from the apple (section 2). A woman's improper thoughts corrupted her children and the world's very foundations (section 3). Lewd thoughts or speech during intercourse caused one's children to die young (section 72; this applied to men as well). A pious woman produced pious children; but a woman who momentarily abandoned herself to pleasure during intercourse begot troublesome children. Such a woman would suffer horrible torments at the hands of demons in the next world (section 102).[16] As circumscribed and subordinated as women's spiritual and ritual lives may have been, their lapses in these three primary categories were believed to have momentous consequences.

Tkhines, or Yiddish prayers and devotions for (and sometimes by) Jewish women, contain more encouraging admonitions. According to *Tkhine of Three Gates*, composed by Sarah Bas Tovim (early eighteenth century), removing a portion of the *ḥallah* dough was as potent as the ancient priest's heave offering, yielding material prosperity, redeeming a woman's sins, and protecting her and her family from harm. Kindling the Sabbath and festival candles helped ensure that her children would be able to study and comprehend the Torah. Giving charity helped ensure that God would watch over her. At the same time, Sarah admonished women not to talk in synagogue, a sin for which she believed herself to have been punished by becoming a destitute wanderer. Sarah did not acknowledge how women's exclusion from synagogue services and insufficient access to the Hebrew liturgy might have encouraged such lapses in attention, however.[17]

Men, too, came under increasing pressure owing to the reception of the kabbalistic tenet that, while prayer and ritual performed with proper mystical intent repaired the cosmos, transgressions begot disaster.[18] Kabbalistic *musar* authors described the torments of Hell, replete with imaginative varieties of demons and graphic tortures.[19] If women were suspected of being temptresses, men remained fully culpable for any seminal emissions, including even involuntary nocturnal emissions. Tzvi Hirsch Kaidanover's popular *Kav ha-Yashar* (Frankfurt, 1705), reprinted dozens of times, advised men to pray that the female demon Lilith's

[16] Edward Fram, *My Dear Daughter: Rabbi Benjamin Slonik and the Education of Jewish Women in Sixteenth-Century Poland* (Cincinnati, 2007).

[17] Tracy Guren Klirs, ed., *The Merit of Our Mothers: A Bilingual Anthology of Jewish Women's Prayers* (Cincinnati, 1992), 14–18, 28–30; Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston, 1998), 3–75.

[18] See, for example, Yosef of Dubno, *Yesod Yosef* (Szklow, 1785; repr. Zhitomir, 1867), 85:43. On the spread of kabbalistic ideas and customs in early modern Eastern Europe, see Elbaum, *Hitpatḥut*, 356–76; and Gries, *Sifrut ha-Hanhaggot*, 42–5, 71–91.

[19] Gershon D. Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2006), 126.

"demonic cohorts, called *keri*, whom Lilith brings to a man at night to make him waste his semen, not appear to him. For it is as if each droplet died by his own hand, since a son could have been born from the droplet."[20] Isaiah Horowitz, in his equally influential *Shnei Luḥot Ha-Brit*, warned that "one who purposefully emits semen wastefully literally spills blood and is as guilty of death as the generation of the Flood."[21] At least one man believed that his lewd thoughts and masturbation had brought on the Khmelnytsky massacres of 1648.[22]

At the same time, during this period one begins to see a more mainstream acceptance of antinomian ideas, functioning as a kind of pressure valve. As repentance was counted among those commandments that helped to repair the "upper worlds," certain *musar* authors allowed that one might occasionally need to sin a bit for the sake of repenting.[23] This provocative notion would gain wider currency during seventeenth- and eighteenth-century messianic revivals (see below).

The positive side of increased cosmic responsibility was increased cosmic influence. The spread of Kabbalah imparted to Jews a sense of control over their world, manifested in the rise of a professional class of mystical practitioners who made magical use of divine names, called *ba'alei shem* ("Name masters"). Some *ba'alei shem* authored books of charms, spells, amulets, remedies, and simple prayers for popular consumption, devoting most of their attention to female-oriented concerns like conception and protection against the dangers of childbirth. They also addressed male-oriented concerns like erectile dysfunction and improper seminal emissions, as well as more universal concerns like illness, protection of newborns from demons and witches, and protection of merchants from highway bandits.[24]

[20] Tzvi Hirsch Kaidanover, *Kav ha-Yashar* (Frankfurt, 1705), ch. 22, 55. See also ibid., ch. 2. On *keri* in general, see Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 131–7.

[21] Isaiah Horowitz, *Shnei Luḥot ha-Brit* (Frankfurt, 1705; repr. Warsaw, 1930), II, pt. 3, "Bereshit," 12. This is a change in language from Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Sefer Kedoshim*, "Issurei Bi'ah" 21:18, which states that it is "as if" he took a life; echoed in the *Shulḥan Arukh*. However, it is doubtful that Horowitz meant his words to be taken literally.

[22] Fram, *Ideals Face Reality*, 63; Davis, *Yom Tov Lipmann Heller*, 221.

[23] Piekarz, *Biyemei Tzmiḥat ha-Ḥasidut*. Piekarz mentions such authors as Samuel Kaidanover, father of Tzvi Hirsch Kaidanover; and Mordecai ben Samuel of Wielkocz, author of *Sha'ar ha-Melekh* (1762/4). Mass repentance was believed to help to stave off massacres. See Yehuda Liebes, "Mysticism and Reality: Towards a Portrait of the Martyr and Kabbalist, R. Samson Ostropoler," in Isadore Twersky, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 221–55.

[24] Examples include *Toldot Adam* (Zolkiew, 1720), attr. to Joel Halpern; Benjamin Beinish Hakohen of Krotoszyn's *Amtaḥat Binyamin* (Wilhermsdorf, 1716) and *Shem tov katan* (Zolkiew, 1781), the latter a tract on *keri*. See Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 142–53; and Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic and Leader* (Waltham, 2005), 7–45.

Magic and medicine formed a shared cultural sphere for Jews and Christians, and became a domain of interreligious exchange. *Ba'alei shem* consulted Christian healers and borrowed remedies and incantations, and Christian healers consulted and borrowed from them. Both groups were indirectly influenced by the ideas of the Renaissance physician-philosopher and inventor of natural medicine Paracelsus (Phillip von Hohenheim, 1493–1541). And both groups depended on a common institution – the pharmacy – for filling their often bizarre prescriptions.[25]

The kabbalistic ethos pervaded the Jewish elite, as well. Some *ba'alei shem* themselves derived from society's elite strata, and many served elite customers.[26] Mystically inclined elites also formed ascetic confraternities and became known as "hasidim," not to be confused with the Hasidim who appeared later (see below). Members of these hasidic confraternities prayed in separate prayer rooms (*kloyzen*) according to the kabbalistic liturgy prescribed by the Safed kabbalist R. Isaac Luria (1534–72), donned white garments during the third meal of the Sabbath, were extra-scrupulous about kosher slaughtering, and engaged in fasts and other forms of self-mortification. The philosopher Solomon Maimon (1754–1800) shocked readers of his autobiography with descriptions of over-zealous hasidim. One hasid endeavored to bring the messiah by fasting, rolling in the snow, keeping nightly vigils, and engaging in "many kabbalistic fooleries – fumigations, conjurations, and similar practices," eventually going out of his mind. Another fasted daily for six years, avoided all food derived from animals or insects, wandered in self-imposed exile, wore a hair shirt, and finally starved himself to death.[27] While Maimon invoked the most extreme cases to serve his critical agenda, there is little doubt that mystical asceticism was gaining significant ground.

CRACKS IN THE EDIFICE: THE FIRST CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL MORES

While Jewish piety and devotion were relatively uniform in eastern Europe throughout the early modern period, that uniformity was tested by the emergence of two rather different phenomena: scientific rationalism and

[25] Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "'You Will Find it in the Pharmacy': Practical Kabbalah and Natural Medicine in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1690–1750," in Glenn Dynner, ed., *Holy Dissent: Jewish and Christian Mystics in Eastern Europe* (Detroit, 2011), 13–54.

[26] Etkes, *The Besht*, 14–27.

[27] Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 120–1; Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism* (Berkeley, 1996), 27–41; *Solomon Maimon: An Autobiography*, trans. J. Clark Murray (Champaign-Urbana, 2001), 132–7.

messianism. The pioneering historian Jacob Katz's formulation of a traditional Ashkenazic authority beset by rationalistic and charismatic challenges, resulting in a societal "crisis," is still essentially upheld.[28] However, the earlier eastern European rabbis' interest in science was more extensive than was once thought, particularly in the fields of philosophy and astronomy, thanks in part to the invention of printing. R. Isserles was, once again, the innovator, composing an excursus on the universe and a commentary on a textbook of planetary astronomy. His student R. Mordecai Jafee (1535–1612) composed an elucidation of "all the astronomy needed by every talmudist [regarding] the biblical commandment of sanctifying the moon by calculation and observation." R. Yom Tov Lipman Heller (1578–1664) incorporated the new astronomy of Tycho Brahe into his sermons. Another student of Isserles, David Gans, moved to Prague, associated with Tycho Brahe, and composed his seminal *Neḥmad ve-Na'im* in 1592. Yet there are doubts as to how much those authors internalized the new scientific methodology, allowing new scientific discoveries to supersede canonical conceptions. The same may be said of the renewed rabbinical interest in philosophy, which was mainly limited to newly available printed editions of medieval philosophical works by Moses Maimonides. The study of astronomy and medieval Jewish philosophy was not yet intended as a challenge to tradition, and it subsided after the sixteenth century.[29]

Messianism posed a more serious challenge to normative practice, owing to its antinomian potential. The sordid tales of the messianic pretender Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76) and his self-proclaimed Polish reincarnation, Jacob Frank (1726–91), can only be relayed briefly here. Sabbatai Zevi, born in Izmir (Smyrna), was proclaimed messiah by the renowned kabbalist Nathan of Gaza in 1665. After a tour through major Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire, Sabbatai arrived back in Izmir where, despite (or perhaps because of) his bizarre behavior and open flouting of Jewish law, scores of Jews accepted his messianic claims. The antinomian belief that a spiritualized, post-legal Torah was now in effect spread

[28] Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, 8–9. Matt Goldish argues, however, that messianism and scientific rationalism shared in common the idea that a utopian era was dawning. See *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 8–40.

[29] Elchanan Reiner, "The Attitude of Ashkenazi Society to the New Science in the Sixteenth Century," *Science in Context* 10, 4 (1997), 589–603; David E. Fishman, "Rabbi Moshe Isserles and the Study of Science among Polish Rabbis," *Science in Context* 10, 4 (1997), 571–88; David Ruderman, *Jewish Thought in the Ages of Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven, 1995); Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller*, 166–8; and Lawrence Kaplan, "Rabbi Mordekhai Jaffe and the Evolution of Jewish Culture in Poland in the Sixteenth Century," in Bernard Dov Cooperman, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 266–82.

throughout the Jewish world. Sabbatai was imprisoned by the sultan and, when given a choice between conversion to Islam and death, converted. However, "Sabbateanism" endured thanks to the continued efforts and apologia of Nathan of Gaza, which were often based on Lurianic kabbalistic conceptions.[30] Polish Sabbateans were often, paradoxically, ascetic hasidim who only occasionally violated Halakhah – for example eating on the ninth day of Av, a holiday that commemorated the destruction of the Temple and thus symbolized exile. But radically antinomian Sabbateans who engaged in ritualistic "wife-swapping" were rumored to exist in the Polish lands, too.[31]

The reception of Sabbateanism in eastern Europe is still debated by historians.[32] What is certain is that, among subsequent self-proclaimed Sabbatean messiahs, none proved as successful in amassing a following as the Polish adventurer Jacob Frank. In 1755, Frank presented himself as Sabbatai Zevi's reincarnation. His radical brand of Sabbateanism included ritual violations of a sexual nature like those practiced in Lanckorona, Poland, on the night of January 27, 1756. Upon being exposed, Frank fled to the Ottoman territories and quickly converted to Islam while his followers were placed under ban (*ḥerem*) in Poland. Frankists obtained the protection of Bishop Mikołaj Dembowski by presenting themselves as anti-talmudists with Trinitarian beliefs. A disputation held in Kamieniec Podolski from June 20 to 28, 1757, ruled a victory for the "anti-Talmudists," resulted in the fining and flogging of the Frankists' rabbinic opponents and the burning of numerous copies of the Talmud.

Bishop Dembowski's death deprived the Frankists of their protector; and now it was they who were persecuted by the Jewish communities. The Frankists then obtained permission to hold a disputation in Lemberg (Lwów) by promising this time to prove the veracity of the medieval legend that Jews used Christian blood for ritual purposes. Frank arrived in Lemberg for the proceedings, but the new disputation, essentially a

[30] The definitive biography is Gershom Scholem's *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, trans. R. J. Tzvi Werblowsky (Princeton, 1973), retold with concision and slight revision by David Halperin in *Sabbatai Zevi: Testimonies to a Fallen Messiah* (Oxford, 2007), introduction. On his followers, see Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets*.

[31] Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 154–5.

[32] Ibid., 153–6; Michal Galas, "Sabbatianism in the Seventeenth-Century Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth: A Review of the Sources," in Rachel Elior, ed., *The Sabbatian Movement and its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism*, Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 17 (Jerusalem, 2001), 51–63. Jacob Barnai argues that the Khmelnytsky massacres were an important impetus for Sabbateanism. See "The Outbreak of Sabbateanism – the Eastern European Factor," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1994), 171–83.

blood libel, was prematurely halted by the Vatican. On September 17, Frank was baptized along with several thousand of his followers; but suspicions about his sincerity resulted in his imprisonment in a Częstochowa monastery. In 1772, freed by the Russians, Frank moved to Brünn (Brno) in Moravia and resumed his activities.[33] One revisionist interpretation of Frank's career is that he sought, by means of conversions and disputations, to abrogate all religious law and ritual – Jewish, Christian, and Islamic alike – for the sake of a utopian religious coexistence and gender inclusiveness, and that persecutions by the rabbinical establishment pushed him to acts of desperation. But many Frankist teachings and testimonies suggest an incorrigible mischief maker, misogynist, and opportunist.[34]

HASIDISM: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF POPULAR MYSTICISM

The most popular and enduring challenge to eastern European Jewish spiritual authority occurred with the rise of the new Hasidism near the end of the early modern period. Based on the teachings of an ambitious, visionary *ba'al shem* named R. Israel ben Eliezer, the Ba'al Shem Tov ("The Besht," *c.* 1700–60), the movement crystallized around several disciples and descendants who combined the eloquence of the preachers with the magical acumen of the *ba'alei shem* and who were referred to as *tzaddikim* (in Yiddish, *Rebbes*). At first blush, the new Hasidism seemed to entail little in the way of innovation. Adherents remained within the bounds of Halakhah, including in their insistence on extra-scrupulous kosher slaughtering using steel knives. The Hasidic liturgy was based on the Lurianic kabbalistic liturgy, which had long been employed by old-style, ascetic hasidim. Even key Hasidic concepts such as divine immanence, worship through corporeality (*avodah be-gashmiyut*),

[33] See Bernard Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100–1800* (Philadelphia, 1982), 236–61; Meir Balaban, *Toward the History of the Frankist Movement* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1934), I; Kraushar, *Frank i frankiści polscy*, vol. I (Krakow, 1895), trans. as Herbert Levy, ed., *Jacob Frank: The End to the Sabbataian Heresy* (Lanham, 2001); Bernard Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland* (Philadelphia, 1972), 236–61; Harris Lenowitz, *The Jewish Messiahs: From Galilee to Crown Heights* (New York, 2001), 167–98; and Paweł Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement in his Lifetime* (Philadelphia, 2011).

[34] See, e.g., Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude*. For testimony and teachings, see *The Collection of the Words of the Lord [Jacob Frank]*, ed., trans., and annotated with an introduction by Harris Lenowitz (forthcoming; currently available at https://archive.org/details/TheCollectionOfTheWordsOfTheLordJacobFrank). See also Lanowitz, "Me'ayin Yavo 'Azri? The Help of Jacob Frank and His Daughter, Ewa," in Dynner, ed., *Holy Dissent*, 281–309.

communion with God (*devekut*), and the very notion of the *tzaddik*, may be traced to earlier literature.[35]

Yet Hasidism's innovation was to popularize those concepts and embody them within living exemplars. *Tzaddikim* derived primarily from the elite stratum – they were typically members of prominent mercantile and rabbinic families with personal dynamism who presented an attractive alternative to communal rabbis, some of whom had become compromised in the eyes of ordinary Jews (see above). *Tzaddikim* amalgamated existing spiritual leadership roles – rabbi, popular preacher, *ba'al shem*, and, to a certain extent, messiah. Less interested than prior mystics in contemplating the cosmos, they claimed an ability to sanctify the mundane realm through a dual-staged mystical cycle: by studying, praying, and discerning the divine sparks embedded in the corporeal world, a *tzaddik* entered a state of communion with God (*devekut*). From this exalted state, he drew down divine bounty for the benefit of his community in the form of miracles and good fortune.[36] *Tzaddikim* proved willing to employ this feat on behalf of the rich and poor, young and old, and male and female alike, hence the common misconception that Hasidism was a popular (as opposed to popul*ist*) movement. Jews across eastern Europe streamed to the courts of *tzaddikim* with requests for their supernatural interventions and, as long as they were there, revelled in the communal singing, dancing, and ecstatic worship.

Hasidism transformed the spiritual disposition of much of east European Jewry. If older kabbalistic conceptions about sin and retribution in the afterlife had terrified many Jews into religious conformity and pushed some toward harsh asceticism, the Ba'al Shem Tov and his disciples promoted an inverse message: "God's presence (*Shekhinah*) will not inspire out of sorrow, but only out of the joy of performing commandments."[37] Many also sought this rarefied joy by feasting, singing, dancing, and liquor

[35] Piekarz, *Biyemei*, 346–56, 361–76; Shaul Stampfer, "The Dispute over Polished Knives and Hasidic *Shechita*," in Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, and Joseph Dan, eds., *Studies in Hasidism*, Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 15 (Jerusalem, 1999), 197–210.

[36] Rachel Elior, *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism* (London, 2008); Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (New York, 1995); Dynner, *Men of Silk*, introduction and ch. 5. On messianism in Hasidism, see Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971), 176–202; and Elliot Wolfson, "Immanuel Frommann's Commentary on Luke and the Christianizing of Kabbalah: Some Sabbatean and Hasidic Affinities," in Dynner, ed., *Holy Dissent*, 171–222. On *devekut*, see Gershom Scholem, "*Devekut*, or Communion with God," and Ada Rapoport-Albert's important revision, "God and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship," in Gershon Hundert, ed., *Essential Papers on Hasidism* (New York, 1991), 275–329.

[37] Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 115, quoting a letter from the Besht to R. Jacob Joseph of Polonne printed in *Shivḥei ha-Besht*, no. 49.

consumption – pleasurable activities which bent but did not break Halakhah. And the more ascetically inclined *tzaddik* R. Naḥman of Bratslav (1772–1810) regarded suffering and melancholy as pathways to achieving genuine joy.[38]

The idea that one could worship the Divine by engaging with, rather than eschewing, the pleasures of this world probably had roots in Sabbateanism. But as Hasidism did not promote worship through outright sin, seeking rather to unlock the holy potential of the mundane sphere, it was able to weather the storm of controversy initiated by *mitnagdim* ("opponents"), led by the famous old-style hasid and talmudist, R. Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, the Gaon of Vilna (1720–97).[39] Eventually, *mitnagdim* answered the Hasidic challenge with conceptual and institutional innovations of their own, including several prestigious supra-communal *yeshivot*.[40]

In the end, Hasidic leaders probably did more to preserve normative piety and devotion than weaken it. In Heschel's words:

> [The Hasidim] banished melancholy from the soul and uncovered the great fortune of being a Jew . . . One began to feel the infinite sweetness that comes from fulfilling the precept of hospitality, or from donning *tallis* and *tefillin*. What meaning is there to the life of a Jew, if not the acquisition of the ability to taste the joys of Paradise? He who does not taste Paradise in the performance of a precept in this world will not feel Paradise in the world to come.[41]

Alongside these spiritual attractions, however, one detects an impulse of defiance in Hasidic leaders, who encouraged men to grow their beards and sidelocks longer, don exotic silk gabardines and fur hats (*shtreimels*), and engage in religious exhibitionism at a time when the formerly Polish lands had come under the control of absolutist monarchs bent on homogenizing their multi-ethnic populations.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, a new rationalist movement appeared on the horizon: Haskalah. This movement of Jewish societal reform attributed to the German Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn

[38] Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: The Life and Spiritual Quest of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (New York, 1992), esp. 41 and 264.

[39] On Hasidism's axiomatic principle of worship through corporeality, see Seth Brody, "Open Up to Me the Gates of Righteousness," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 89, 1/2 (July–Oct., 1998), 3–44; and Elliot Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson* (New York, 2009).

[40] See Immanuel Etkes, *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and His Image* (Berkeley, 2002); Shaul Stampfer, *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century: Creating a Tradition of Learning* (Oxford, 2012); and Eliyahu Stern, *The Genius: Elijah of Vilna and the Making of Modern Judaism* (New Haven, 2013).

[41] Heschel, "The Eastern European Era," 13–14.

(1729–86) did not seek a repudiation of traditional piety and devotion, at least during its early stages. Haskalah is now understood as a bilingual program whose aim was to actually reinvigorate the Jewish tradition through its synthesis with western European culture and a reordering of its intellectual priorities along rationalistic lines (e.g., privileging biblical interpretation and grammar, Jewish philosophy, "practical" portions of the Talmud, and so on). Its proponents, known as "maskilim," held that "the excess baggage that had been yoked to the shoulders of the Jewish people by medieval prejudice and superstition would, of course, be discarded, but without the loss – indeed, with the rejuvenation – of a vibrant Hebrew culture and authentic Jewish faith," in the words of historian Michael Stanislawski.[42] According to the early nineteenth-century Galician maskil Joseph Perl, maskilim were "men whose sole desire was that the Jews should not be a mockery in the eyes of other nations, [who wished] to learn various languages and disciplines, but without – perish the thought – abandoning the ways of our ancestors and in accordance with the faith and fear of God."[43] Revisionist scholarship, moreover, suggests a movement with Romantic inclinations that sought to actually expand piety into realms like civil service and political fealty.[44]

The first eastern European Jews who journeyed to Berlin and gained exposure to western ideas varied in their approaches to Haskalah. Solomon Maimon describes his visit to Moses Mendelssohn's house in Berlin as life-changing; yet his primarily western philosophical orientation suggests less commitment to the Jewish dimension of the cultural synthesis. Barukh ben Yaakov Schick (1744–1808), on the other hand, a rabbinical author of works on anatomy and astronomy who also met Mendelssohn, limited his association with Haskalah to the spread of scientific knowledge among the Jews of eastern Europe. A third eastern European visitor to Mendelssohn's home, Mendel Lefin (1749–1826), inhabited an intermediary position. Lefin returned to Poland–Lithuania and, with almost missionary zeal, published Hebrew and Yiddish works aimed at familiarizing Jewish audiences with the rudiments of science, medicine, and western ethics.[45]

[42] Michael Stanislawski, *For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry* (Oxford, 1988), 4.

[43] Shmuel Feiner, "Towards a Historical Definition of Haskalah," in Feiner and David Sorkin, eds., *New Perspectives on the Haskalah* (London, 2001), 196. Citation from Joseph Perl's *Bohen Zaddik* (Prague, 1838), 47.

[44] Olga Litvak, *Haskalah: The Romantic Movement in Judaism* (New Jersey, 2012).

[45] See Maimon, *Autobiography*; David Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov* (New York, 1995); and Nancy Sinkoff, *Out of the Shtetl: Making Jews Modern in the Polish Borderlands* (Atlanta, 2004).

As the early modern period waned and eastern Europe was brought under the authority of absolutist monarchs, Haskalah crystallized into a movement that stressed loyalty to the state while fiercely opposing the growing Hasidic movement by composing satirical literature in Hebrew and, to a lesser extent, Yiddish. More radical integrationists like Jacob Tugendhold (1794–1871) and Antoni Eisenbaum (1791–1852), who displayed less commitment to Jewish religious traditions and languages, began to make their appearance as well, sometimes obtaining governmental posts. But the Haskalah and integrationist attempts to transform Jews into Poles or Russians of the Mosaic persuasion in the absence of tolerance, civil rights, and full emancipation did not gain wide reception until relatively late. Notwithstanding the diversification of spiritual authority, the bulk of eastern European Jewry – now constituting around three-quarters of the world's Jewish population – would hold to an essentially traditional value system for another century.[46]

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[46] Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Eugene Orenstein (Philadelphia, 1985); Marcin Wodzinski, *Hasidism and Haskalah in the Kingdom of Poland* (London, 2005); Dynner, *Men of Silk*, 137–96; and Dynner, *Yankel's Tavern*, 153–73.

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CHAPTER 23

THE RISE OF HASIDISM

MOSHE ROSMAN

THE KABBALISTIC TURN

Around 1740, a man named Hillel Ba'al Shem, who lived in what is now northern Ukraine, wrote a manuscript called *Sefer ha-Ḥeshek* [The Book of Desire [for God!]].[1] As a *ba'al shem* (a "master of God's holy name," drawing on the power that permeates it to perform wonders), Hillel served as a shaman, an expert in communication between the human and divine spheres. *Sefer ha-Ḥeshek* was written primarily as a manual enumerating the various ways of exorcising a *dybbuk* (a "demonic spirit"), ensuring a healthy and easy birth, curing illness, gaining the upper hand over one's rivals, earning a decent living, etc. Prayers, incantations, amulets, potions, formulas, esoteric calculations, and magic illustrations are the stuff of this manual. *Sefer ha-Ḥeshek*, however, is a professional's book. Only someone who has gone through a proper apprenticeship with an established *ba'al shem* might gain possession of it and employ it as a refresher guide to efficacious use of knowledge he had already mastered. It was analogous to a modern "Physician's Desk Reference."[2]

[1] Due to space limitations, the footnotes are intended to serve as a gateway to the academic literature on our subject and not as exhaustive citation of all the sources. For more detailed bibliography and analysis of at least Israeli scholarship on Hasidism, see M. Rosman, "Hasidism: The Verdict of Israeli Historiography" [Hebrew], *Zion* 74 (2009), 141–75; see esp. A. Rapoport-Albert, "Hasidism after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change," in Rapoport-Albert, ed., *Hasidism Reappraised* (London, 1996), 76–140. For a survey of the history, teachings, and literature of Hasidism, see the articles by David Assaf and Joseph Dan in G. D. Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven, 2008) [=YEJEE], I, 659–73, and *passim* according to the "Synoptic Outline of Contents," II, 2169–82.

[2] Hillel Ba'al Shem, *Sefer ha-Ḥeshek*, Vernadsky Library, Kiev, Jewish Division, ms. Or 178; Y. Petrovsky-Shtern, "Master of an Evil Name: Hillel Ba'al Shem and His *Sefer ha-Heshek*," *AJS Review* 28 (2004), 217–48; cf. H. Matras, "Sifrei Segulot u-Refu'ot be-'Ivrit" [Hebrew Charm Books] (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1997).

In his book, Hillel lashed out bitterly at the popularization and vulgarization of practical Kabbalah techniques as represented by four handbooks printed in Zolkiew in the 1720s: "Everyone buys these books very cheaply . . . and [they] become ba'alei shem, but they don't know the slightest thing and they mislead and blind."[3]

Hillel Ba'al Shem, his manuscript, the popular Kabbalah books he decried, and those "amateurs" who, guided by these books, tried their hand at kabbalistic practices – all testify to the importance of Kabbalah, and especially its practical expression, in eighteenth-century Jewish life in Poland and elsewhere. From the sixteenth century, with the renewal of serious mystical study among the Iberian-Jewish exiles in Safed and the elaboration of the kabbalistic theories of Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria (the "Ari"), many Jews became convinced that Kabbalah held the esoteric, true meaning of the Torah. Various Kabbalah texts were published and became a mainstay of the curriculum of many post-*yeshiva* academies (that is, both communally supported *batei midrash* and privately supported *kloyzn*, or study houses) for advanced scholars and religious adepts.[4]

However, in this period it was not only highly learned elites who took an interest in Kabbalah. People who might not be able to study original Kabbalah texts could hear about or read numerous popular abridgments, anthologies, and translations into Yiddish of kabbalistic tracts. These eliminated the arcane speculative and contemplative theories, but left in the ritual, theurgic, and magical practices that became part and parcel of routine daily religious conduct. Many common people came to believe that Kabbalah-based rituals were the tools of direct communion with the Divine and the way to bring God into daily life while continually working toward the final Redemption. The daily liturgy, for example, came to incorporate kabbalistic meditations and theurgic passages. Such routines as birth and funeral practices came increasingly to include actions aimed at foiling demons that, according to kabbalistic interpretation, threatened to harm all human enterprises. People adopted more theurgic rituals that

[3] *Sefer ha-Ḥeshek*, 119b; cf. H. Pedaya, "On the Development of the Social–Religious–Economic Model of Hasidism" [Hebrew], in M. Ben-Sasson, ed., *Dat ve-Kalkalah* [Religion and Economy] (Jerusalem, 1995), 331–3.

[4] Y. Elbaum, *Petiḥut ve-Histagrut* [Openness and Insularity: Late Sixteenth-Century Jewish Literature in Poland and Ashkenaz] (Jerusalem, 1990), 183–222; Z. Gries, *Sifrut ha-Hanhagot* [Conduct Literature: Its History and Place in the Life of Beshtian Hasidism] (Jerusalem, 1989), [15]–[21]; E. Reiner, "Wealth, Status and Torah Scholarship: The Kloyz in Eastern European Jewish Society in the 17th–18th Centuries" [Hebrew], *Zion* 58 (1993), 287–328.

were believed to ward off or ameliorate sickness. Practical Kabbalah and theurgy informed virtually every area of life.[5]

Communication with the Divine and revelation of knowledge gained in the upper spheres, particularly in the wake of the messianic enthusiasm engendered by Sabbateanism and its eighteenth-century offshoots, became an everyday affair. As Dov Ber of Linitz (Ilintsy, Liniec), the compiler of *Shivḥei ha-Besht* (the collection of tales about the purported founder of Hasidism, Israel Ba'al Shem Tov and his associates), writing in the 1790s, recalled: "in earlier [i.e. long before 1790] days when people revived after lying in a coma close to death, they used to tell about the awesome things they had seen in the upper world ... there were also mad people who injured themselves with stones during the reading of the Torah, and who used to reveal people's sins to them."[6]

As *ba'alei shem* were the experts in practical Kabbalah, people, even members of the learned class, tended to turn to them for instruction as to what magical ritual behavior to adopt in order to be secure or to contend with misfortune.[7] The memoirist, Ber of Bolechow, also writing in the 1790s, looked back on his youth in the 1730s and 1740s, noting the influence of the increasing number of *ba'alei shem*, or *ba'alei ha-shemot*, as he refers to them:

> After learning a bit of the Five Books of Moses and just the tip of the language of the Mishna and the legal literature, students immediately began to inquire about the secrets of the Torah from the kabbalists; that is, the *hasidim* or the *ba'alei ha-shemot* (as this was their original appellation). They would glorify them [the kabbalists – *ba'alei ha-shemot*] and tell of the miracles and wonders that they performed with practical Kabbalah.[8]

Behavior prescribed by practical Kabbalah became so popular that some carried it to extremes in order to prove their devotion and have maximum

[5] Elbaum, *Petiḥut ve-Histagrut*, 183–222 and 356–76; Gries, *Sifrut ha-Hanhagot*, [15]–[21]; B. Huss, "The Anthological Interpretation: The Emergence of Anthologies of Zohar Commentaries in the Seventeenth Century," *Prooftexts* 19 (1999), 1–19; Huss, "*Sefer ha-Zohar* as a Canonical Sacred and Holy Text," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 7 (1997), 257–307.

[6] Dov Ber ben Samuel, *In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Tov: Shivḥei ha-Besht*, ed. and trans. D. Ben Amos and J. R. Mintz (London, 1993) [= *SHB*], 4.

[7] I. Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic and Leader* (Lebanon, NH, 2005), 7–46; M. Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Oxford, 2013), 11–27.

[8] G. D. Hundert, "The Introduction to *Divre Binah* by Dov Ber of Bolechów: An Unexamined Source for the History of Jews in the Lwów Region in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," *AJS Review* 33 (2009), 225–69, esp. 257.

effect on the Divine sphere. Here are two examples remembered by Solomon Maimon (1754–1800) in his autobiography, written in the 1790s:

> Simon of Lubtsch had undergone the severest exercises of penance. He had already carried out the *Teshuvat HaKana*, which consists in fasting daily for six years, and avoiding the use of anything that derives from a living being (meat, milk, honey and the like) for the evening meal [after dark] . . . But he felt that he would not satisfy his conscience unless he further observed the *Teshuvat ha-Mishkal*, which requires a particular form of penance proportioned to every sin.
>
> . . .
>
> Yossel of Kleck proposed nothing less than to hasten the advent of the Messiah. To this end he performed strict penance, fasted, rolled himself in the snow, undertook night vigils and similar austerities . . . To these exercises he added many kabbalistic fooleries – fumigations, conjurations, and similar practices.[9]

CIRCLES OF HASIDISM

While not necessarily *ba'alei shem*, people like Simon and Yossel were often referred to as "Hasidim" (sing.: Hasid, meaning "pietist," usually with ascetic tendencies). They drew on a tradition of mystically inspired asceticism going back at least as far as German Jewish Pietists (*Hasidei Ashkenaz*) of the twelfth–thirteenth centuries and renewed in sixteenth-century Safed and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century central and eastern Europe.

In eighteenth-century Poland, these Hasidim[10] might be loners who spent their time in various puritanical customs. Often they came together in loosely organized groups or conventicles (*ḥavurot*; sing: *ḥavurah*). These *havurot* had a range of patterns of membership, organization, leadership, and activities. Groups like the important *kloyzn* (sing.: *kloyz*) of the towns of Brody and Ostrog were privately endowed formal institutions whose members were select, mature, adult scholars who had completed the traditional *yeshiva* and now studied mostly independently under the roof of the *kloyz*. Other groups, like the one that included Naḥman of Kosow and Aryeh Leib the preacher, were composed mainly of pneumatics and charismatics whose objective was to induce their own repentance and

[9] S. Maimon, *Autobiography*, trans. J. C. Murray (London, 1954), 81–3.

[10] The following description is derived from: Ben-Zion Dinur, *Historical Writings*, vol. I: *Be-Mifneh ha-Dorot* [Turning Point of the Generations] (Jerusalem, 1954), 159–70; A. J. Heschel, *The Circle of the Ba'al Shem Tov*, ed. and trans. S. H. Dresner (New York, 1985); Etkes, *Besht*, 152–202; Y. Hisdai, "'The Servant of God' in the Generation of the Founders of Hasidism" [Hebrew], *Zion* 47 (1982), 253–92; Pedaya, "Model," 325–8; Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 80–101; Reiner, "Kloyz"; Rosman, *Founder*, 11–27, 181–3; J. G. Weiss, "A Circle of Pre-Hassidic Pneumatics," in Weiss, *Studies in East European Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism*, ed. D. Goldstein (London, 1997), 27–42.

attain the highest spiritual level. Membership in these groups was less formalized than in the *kloyzn*. The *ḥavurah* of the Podolian town of Miedzyboz appears to have been a collection of scholarly types who frequented the public study house (*bet midrash*) of their community, engaging in an admixture of standard rabbinic text study with kabbalistic emphasis added on and Hasidic ascetic practices that framed the discipline of their lives.

As to leadership, some groups, like the Brody and Ostrog *kloyzn*, had formal leaders. Others, like the Kuty *ḥavurah* had leading figures, without defined duties and prerogatives, and apparently not in a hierarchical relationship with other members of the group. (In the *kloyzn* as well, there were often leading figures who rivaled the formal head in importance.) Leaders and leading figures might be scholars of both the Talmud and Kabbalah (Hayim Zanzer, Moses Oster), communal rabbis (Moses of Kuty), preachers (Judah Leib Mokhiah), *ba'alei shem* (Israel Ba'al shem Tov, Isaac of Drohobycz), or even someone absorbed in worldly affairs (Naḥman of Kosow, a tax farmer), and most represented some combination of these types and could also be characterized as charismatics.

These separatist elitist groups prayed, studied, and often ate together. At least some of their members practiced seclusion, solitary wandering, mystical contemplation, frequent fasting, ritual immersions, and other ascetic and penitential practices. As a group, they were immersed in kabbalistic study and adopted kabbalistic Hasidic customs such as wearing white and eating twelve *ḥallot* (loaves) on the Sabbath, praying ecstatically, and adopting the Lurianic prayer rite (as opposed to the standard Ashkenazic one).

Due to their intensively pietistic behavior, the members of these groups regarded their status relative to the rank-and-file people of their communities as analogous to the status of the Sabbath relative to the weekdays. This extra measure of holiness gave them the power to gain divine forgiveness for the people of Israel and also to prescribe for them the *tikkun* ("penance, rehabilitation") that would make them worthy of such forgiveness and ultimate redemption. In this spirit, these ascetic, mystical Hasidim would make spiritual and ritual demands upon their communities – for example, leading prayers according to the Lurianic rite or imposing supererogatory strictures on the communal cantor and *shoḥet* ("ritual slaughterer"). In effect, these Hasidim were establishing stricter ritual benchmarks and accumulating power for themselves as the arbiters of these new standards.

On the other hand, these Hasidic circles tended to be somewhat reclusive, removed from the workaday world and the common members of the community. The Hasidim were involved mainly with each other. There also was some degree of communication between members of the different

groups and between the groups themselves. Later sources preserve traditions about these activities. But this communication was never routinized or institutionalized. Its contents were not recorded systematically or codified into an ideology in their time. There were apparently no uniform requirements for membership in these groups and the relations within and between them were never formalized.[11]

Moreover, group members were generically speaking "Hasidim," but not the Hasidim *of* a certain group or *of* a certain leader. In contrast to later Hasidism, they were not Kuty Hasidim or Reb Naḥman of Kosow Hasidim.[12] When, for example, the brother-in-law of Israel ben Eliezer (called Ba'al Shem Tov – or Besht), Gershon of Kuty, moved to the Land of Israel, he did so as an individual seeking personal religious fulfillment. In contrast to the famous *aliyot* ("migrations") of Hasidic leaders in 1777 and later (see below), he did not go as a representative of the "Hasidim" or "Hasidism," or to "spread its message," perpetuate its ethos, deepen its influence, or perhaps set up a new branch in new territory.

It would be anachronistic, then, to describe these circles as a "movement." They had no official canon, articulated ideology, sophisticated organization, or centralized leadership. A better description might be that they represented a relatively widespread style or fashion of piety in their era, typified by characteristic Kabbalah-based customs mentioned above.

The large majority of Jews outside these small circles were often ambivalent about them and sometimes critical of them. Even some of the more institutionalized Hasidic groups (e.g. *kloyzn*) were critical of less formal circles whom they accused of not being committed enough to study (replacing canonized halakhic texts with Kabbalah and *musar* ["conduct and morality"] literature, for example); of not being serious enough about criticizing sinful behavior; of indulging in worldly pleasures such as drinking alcohol, dancing, and singing; of being hypocritical and displaying pretentious, counterfeit piety (e.g. ecstatic prayer) that stemmed from a desire to impress rather than from conviction.[13] There is, however, no evidence of any organized, institutionalized opposition to these Hasidic circles. Their religious style was typically viewed as "Another" (to some, perhaps, an undesirable one); but they did not by any means constitute "The Other," totalized into a targeted enemy, the chief manifestation of

[11] Heschel, *Circle*; Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 80–101.

[12] A. Green, "Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq," in Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality,* vol. II: *From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present* (New York, 1987), 127–56, esp. 153; Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 130–1.

[13] Dinur, *Be-Mifneh*, 165; Etkes, *Besht*, 161–2; Pedaya, "Model," 333; M. Piekarz, *Bimei Tzemihat ha-Hasidut* [The Beginning of Hasidism] (Jerusalem, 1978), 131–47.

evil, whose elimination was vital to the perfection of all society, as would be the case for critics of the later Hasidic movement.

The existence of these separatist-elitist, spiritually avant-garde, mystical-ascetic Hasidic groups is probably the background to the story in *Shivḥei ha-Besht* that begins: "A story: When the Besht came to the community of Miedzyboz, he was not important in the eyes of the Hasidim, that is, R. Zev Kutzes and R. David Purkes, because of the name which people called him, 'Besht.' This name is not fitting for a *tzaddik*."[14]

In other words, the elitist Hasidim of Miedzyboz at first looked down on the Besht because he was a *ba'al shem*. This tells us both that the older type of Hasid was already established in Miedzyboz when the Besht arrived there and that not everyone shared the enthusiasm for *ba'alei shem* that Ber of Bolechow thought to be so widespread. Rather, like Hillel (a *ba'al shem* himself) in *Sefer ha-Ḥeshek*, they were skeptical about the *bona fides* of most of these men, considering them to be charlatans rather than shamans. However, it was among these loosely associated, scholarly and charismatic groups (*havurot*) that the Besht focused his "Hasidic" activity and made his historical mark.

BA'AL SHEM TOV

Israel ben Eliezer (the Besht) was apparently born *circa* 1699 in the Carpathian mountain border area joining Poland and Bukovina (today a Romanian region, then under Ottoman rule). His life (especially the early part when no one knew of his future prominence and hence did not pay much attention) is poorly documented and enveloped in legends which grew in number and detail after his death and continuing into the next century.

As best as can be pieced together from the few letters that he wrote, from scattered brief contemporary testimonies, and from later reports and traditions, the trajectory of his life as a *ba'al shem* and charismatic fit into a conventional rubric for Jews of southeast Poland (today: Ukraine) in the first half of the eighteenth century. He apparently acquired a reputation as an efficacious *ba'al shem*, so that while many *ba'alei shem* bore the indignities and poverty of itinerancy, he was able to obtain preferred posts as a resident *ba'al shem*. The last was in Miedzyboz beginning around 1740. Given a house owned by the Jewish community to live in rent- and tax-free, the Besht's job was to offer practical religious guidance and provide magical security for the community as a whole as well as for individuals. One way he did this was by communicating with the divine spheres to

[14] *SHB*, 173–4.

learn why someone or some group was suffering, interceding on their behalf, and learning what calamities might lie ahead and how they could be avoided. In this he accepted responsibility for attempting to protect not only his own community, but Jews in towns elsewhere in Ukraine and, by extension, the entire House of Israel. Another thing the Besht had to do was to outsmart or overpower the ubiquitous and malevolent demons.[15]

The Besht's tools were ecstatic trances (during which he experienced ascents of the soul in order to enter the divine realm), amulets, incantations, adjurations, special prayers, exorcisms, and potions. It was as a *ba'al shem*, expert in practical Kabbalah, that he related to most members of the Miedzyboz Jewish community and tried to help people in need. Christians, too, recognized his role and, according to tradition, some occasionally utilized his services. Sometimes he was called to far-away towns to deal with particular cases needing a *ba'al shem*'s attention. In this role, he was paid for his ministrations by those who commissioned them and this was how he earned his living.[16]

There was apparently another role the Besht played in Miedzyboz – that of the head of the circle of learned mystical-ascetic Hasidim that centered on the *bet midrash*. We know of five people, presumably such Hasidim, who received weekly stipends from the community. In addition, another five were identified in tax documents by virtue of their relationship to the Besht: his scribe, Zvi Hirsh; his son, also Zvi Hirsh; his stepson, Shmuel; his son-in-law, Yeḥiel Mikhel; and his attendant Jankiel (Yokel, Ya'akov) Ayzykowicz. These ten people, together with the rest of his extended family, were the Besht's intimate associates and composed his primary circle of influence.[17]

In addition to having links with his associates in Miedzyboz, it is evident that the Besht maintained relationships, sometimes exchanging visits, with other Hasidic groups and their leaders. Sources of varying types, quality, and usefulness name mystical adepts, Hasidim, such as Naḥman of Horodenka, Moses of Kuty, Naḥman of Kosow, Pinḥas of Koretz (Korzec), Isaac of Drohobycz, Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye (Polonne), and Dov Ber the Magid of Mezerich (Miedzyrzec). Some of these men seem to have been friendly (or not so friendly) rivals, some colleagues, some disciples, and some had rather limited contact with the Besht. For example, according to Hasidic tradition, which might be expected to try to maximize their encounters, the Magid (the purported "successor" to the Besht), is reputed to have spent but two visits

[15] Etkes, *Besht*; Rosman, *Founder*.

[16] Etkes, *Besht*; Rosman, *Founder*; cf. A. Teller, "The Sluck Tradition Concerning the Early Days of the Besht" [Hebrew], in D. Assaf, Y. Dan, and I. Etkes, eds., *Meḥkarei Hasidut* (Jerusalem, 1999), 15–38.

[17] Rosman, *Founder*, 155–9, 181–2; cf. Etkes, *Besht*, 152–202.

with the master (the second said to have extended for half a year). Very little is known about these sojourns and surprisingly little is even recounted in the early legends. The Magid's recorded statements seldom mention the Besht and never refer to him as "my teacher" (*mori*).[18]

The preponderance of the sources indicates that, in addition to his shamanesque qualities and leadership of the pietistic Miedzyboz Hasidim, the Besht was apparently notable in his day for his techniques for "raising" (that is, purifying or sanctifying) alien, prurient thoughts and for his anti-asceticism.[19] These practices eventually became mainstays of Hasidism. His reputation as both *ba'al shem* and charismatic spread far beyond Miedzyboz and, as already noted, he both visited other locations and was visited by various people seeking his help as a *ba'al shem* or his inspiration as a spiritual expert. He did not, however, maintain a later-style Hasidic court with hundreds or thousands of followers. Neither did he establish any institutions, hold offices (aside from his roles in Miedzyboz), write books or treatises, or teach in a systematic way.[20]

FROM CIRCLE TO COURT

Beginning evidently with the group led by Dov Ber, the Great Magid of Mezerich, the Hasidic circles evolved into something else. These circles originally had often formally taken the shape of an existing institution (*kloyz* or *bet midrash*), had had a very limited, elite membership, and were conducted on a rather informal basis. The circle of the Magid, however – and presumably the circles of his disciples who set up their own groups during his lifetime and following upon his death – introduced some important innovations.[21]

[18] S. H. Dresner, *The Zaddik* (New York, 1960), 59–60; *SHB*, 81–4; cf. Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 92 n. 47.

[19] Etkes, *Besht*, esp. 165–6, 186, 254–6; M. Idel, "Prayer, Ecstasy and 'Alien Thoughts' in the Religious Experience of the Besht" [Hebrew], in D. Assaf and A. Rapoport-Albert, eds., *Yashan Mipnei Ḥadash* [Let the Old Make Way for the New] (Jerusalem, 2009), 78–93; Rosman, *Founder*, 182–3; *SHB*, 156.

[20] Etkes, *Besht*, 46–78; Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 80–94; Rosman, *Founder*, 173–86.

[21] The description of the early courts that follows is drawn primarily from: Dinur, *Be-Mifneh*, 159–70; I. Etkes, "The Early Hasidic 'Court,'" in E. Lederhendler and J. Wertheimer, eds., *Text and Context* (New York, 2005), 157–86; Etkes, *Yaḥid be-Doro* [The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and His Image] (Jerusalem, 1998), 118–20; Z. Gries, "From Mythos to Ethos: A Sketch of the Image of Avraham of Kalisk" [Hebrew], in S. Ettinger, ed., *Uma ve-Toldoteha* [Nation and History] (Jerusalem, 1984), 117–46; Gries, *Hanhagot*, 103–48; G. D. Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley, 2004), 179–81; Maimon, *Autobiography*, 167–19; Pedaya, "Model"; Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 94–101.

First of all, membership in the group was open to any male on a spiritual quest and inclined to join. The Magid and other leaders actively recruited new members by sending emissaries around the countryside to preach his doctrines and sing his praises, appealing to young men in particular. This meant that most members of the group would truly be disciples or acolytes rather than colleagues and associates. They certainly would not all be scholars or potential scholars. In this way, the circle which had been occupied primarily with the spiritual life of its own small group of members opened itself up to contact with the wider society and positioned itself for broad impact on the general Jewish public.

The prospective new followers would come to the Magid's residence ("court"; Hebrew: *ḥatzer*) in Mezerich, which did not double as a communal or private academy of some type but was established, maintained, and organized under the Magid's own auspices. Later courts were financed in part by the *pidyon* money that visitors brought, modifying the kabbalistic tradition of bringing a donation (used primarily for the poor) when seeking a cure or a miracle from a holy man. It may be that this expedient was already adopted in the Magid's court; it certainly was a feature of the court of his disciple Ḥayim Haykl which flourished in the 1770s and 1780s.

The *tzaddik*, or charismatic holy man, now became the unquestioned leader and unambiguous focal point of the group. It was contact with him and words of his wisdom that were sought above all. There was a hierarchy in the group based on closeness to him. Moreover, rather than the holy man visiting other circles in a fairly frequent and informal way, he became the object of pilgrimage (perhaps, at least in part, because of Dov Ber's difficulty in walking) and usually stayed at his court receiving his followers. During private interviews with him (*yeḥides*) they would confess their sins and receive a penance prescription (*tikkun*), or present their problems and be given advice or the promise of intercession in the divine spheres. Some followers evolved from pilgrims into long-term residents at the court (*yoshvim*) who sought to plumb the depths of the wisdom of the rebbe (a Yiddish alternative to the term *tzaddik*) and serve him any way they could.

Life at the court – and the relationship with the holy man – became institutionalized and even ritualized. The public appearances of the *tzaddik* were limited, with the third Sabbath meal and the spiritualist sermon preached there representing the climax of the week. At the meal, the holy man dressed impressively all in white from top to toe, employed expansive standardized gestures, such as resting his hand on his forehead, and made use of a mixture of meaningful silence, stirring singing, and virtuoso preaching to create an atmosphere of holiness and inspiration. He discounted asceticism, emphasized prayer, and used the sermon, a popular medium, as his main teaching tool. At times at least, the sermon was based

on biblical verses that the individual pilgrims themselves chose, with its message calibrated to their particular spiritual concerns.

However, while the Magid may have transformed the circle into a court, he still did not create a new "Hasidic Movement." Disciples like Abraham of Kalisk, Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk, and Aaron of Karlin, who set up their own Hasidic communities in his lifetime, were known to be his students and maintained strong personal relations with him. There were not, however, institutionalized relationships between the courts. Each *tzaddik* was autonomous and all-powerful in his "kingdom." His followers were expected to be completely devoted to him. The Hasid's soul was joined at its root with that of *his tzaddik* and not of some leader of "the movement." As in the time of the Besht, the courts may have shared many stylistic features, such as ecstasy in prayer, and theological axioms. The latter probably included such notions as the idea of divine immanence (*let atar panui minei*), the possibility of elevating or purifying alien thoughts (*ha'ala'at maḥshavot zarot*), the option of worship through corporeal media ('*avodah be-gashmiyut*), the occasional necessity to deal with the unspiritual in order to attain a higher spiritual state (*yeridah le-tzorekh aliyah*), and the importance of attaining a state of communion with God (*devekut*).

There still was no canon of proprietary texts, no articulated common doctrine, no officially mandated code of behavior, no systematic – and certainly no centralized – organization, no routinized intergroup communication.

Moreover, there was no consciousness of being a group or "movement" distinct from the organized community (except to constitute its spiritual elite). While the new-type Hasidic courts generally rejected asceticism, there was as yet no formal articulation of differences between the "old-style mystical ascetic Hasidim" (so dubbed by scholars) and those who were close to the Magid. In fact, the Magid's position was that the style of piety he was cultivating was nothing revolutionary, new, or out of the ordinary, but was merely part of long-established, pietistic Hasidism, a current within the mainstream. Any questioning of his group's legitimacy was due to misunderstanding or willful misrepresentation. In fact, the teachings quoted in his name all indicate that he advocated a spiritualist, quietist, yet non-transgressive, approach to Judaism which posed little challenge to traditional halakhic practice.

Attendance, whether as a casual visitor or a faithful devotee, at the Magid's or a similar court was not a dramatic, decisive act which implied a break with the conventional religious establishment or with one's family. Sampling what was still but "another" pietistic style – emphasizing certain kabbalistically based customs – remained, until 1772, within the realm of the normative.

OPPOSITION AND THE CREATION OF A MOVEMENT

In the spring of 1772, reports began emanating from the "Lithuanian" (now: Belarusian) community of Szklow that Hasidim, associated with Abraham of Kalisk, were behaving in unacceptable ways. As a means of inducing a feeling of radical humility, they prepared for prayer by engaging in what was conventionally viewed as the outrageously immodest practice of doing somersaults or standing on their heads or hands. They mocked Torah scholars as lacking in true religiosity and promulgated an interpretation of a passage in the Zohar (we do not know which one) which was considered by some to be heretical. They were called out publicly for these transgressions and attempted to defend their actions in a losing debate with the establishment rabbinical authorities.[22]

Upon hearing of the acts of these Hasidim and the results of the debate, Elijah the Gaon of Vilna decided to declare all of the Hasidim associated with these new types of courts as members of a heretical sect, akin to the Frankists. They were to be excommunicated, their books burned, and their persons persecuted. The Gaon's condemnation marked a watershed. It transformed the new Hasidim in the eyes of the establishment in Vilna and other communities from "Another" to "The Other."

In response, the officials of the Gaon's community, Vilna, prohibited the Hasidic prayer group in their community, forced the leaders of the Hasidim in Vilna to confess to their transgressions and endure punishment, burned their writings, and proclaimed a general ban (*ḥerem*) against them.[23]

Vilna quickly recruited other communities to a campaign devoted to extirpating this newly declared sect. In declarations and bans, the Hasidim were accused of establishing separate prayer groups conducted according to the Lurianic rite at unconventional times and with indecorous gestures, dress, and enthusiasm; using highly sharpened (and hence probably not perfectly straight) knives for kosher animal slaughter; excessive preoccupation with purity and ecstatic prayer; spending other people's money on celebrations intended to ward off melancholy; showing contempt for traditional scholars and scholarship; and sexual transgressions.[24]

Interestingly, most of their sins had to do with their pietistic, Kabbalah-inspired religious style. While the Hasidim were accused of being Sabbateans or Frankists, there were no references to some new Hasidic ideology or original doctrines. Their actions, not some unconventional

[22] Etkes, *Yaḥid*, 84–108.
[23] Dubnow, *Toldot ha-Hasidut* [History of Hasidism] (Tel Aviv, 1931), 107–17.
[24] Ibid., 118–37; M. Wilensky, ed., *Hasidim u-Mitnagdim* [Hasidim and *Mitnagdim*] (Jerusalem, 1990), I, 27–35.

beliefs or coordinated challenge to established institutions, were what attracted opprobrium. These actions (perhaps with the exception of the more radical moves of the Hasidim of Abraham of Kalisk) had been at least tolerated, by some even admired, for a generation or so. What changed the atmosphere was the Gaon's vehement condemnation that now placed these actions in the context of heresy and caused the Hasidim to be viewed by some as a sect: a defined, distinct group with its own heretical identity, even if no sectarian doctrines had been articulated and the group had no organizational identity or coherence.

Apparently, the Gaon and his associates were moved to put the worst possible interpretation on the actions of these Hasidim because they were offended by their pretension *to be* Hasidim. True Hasidism, like that of the Gaon and his cohorts (and the *kloyz* in Brody which spearheaded the condemnation of the new-style Hasidim by that community), was elitist, based on erudition, asceticism, and conversance with contemplative Kabbalah. These newfangled Hasidim based their piety on Kabbalah-inspired prayer and other customs (some newly cultivated), eschewed asceticism, dabbled mainly in practical Kabbalah, and discounted erudition. These emphases opened membership to virtually anyone, making a mockery of the status of Hasid, traditionally earned only by a select few through difficult intellectual and religious exertions over a long period.[25]

The resentment of these *mitnagdim* ("opponents") is symbolized by their refusal to even accord the appellation "Hasid" to those they banned. The *mitnagdim* consistently referred to them as *mithasdim* ("those who make themselves as if they are Hasidim"; also meaning "religious hypocrites"), *Mezericher*, or *Karliner* (simply those who hail from Mezerich or Karlin, two of the early aforementioned courts). The Hasidim did not fail to notice the insult implied by this terminology.[26]

Thus, it seems that it was the new Hasidim's style and innovations in *Hasidism*, rather than in Judaism, that brought down upon them the wrath of the Gaon. This sufficed, however, for their enemies to portray them not only as illegitimate Hasidim but as illegitimate Jews. That is, in fact, the new courts represented a novel style of Hasidic pietism (including a lack of asceticism, ecstasy, open membership, emphasis on practical Kabbalah), but were strictly normative with regard to the fundamentals of Jewish law like Shabbat, Kashrut, and the laws of sex and marriage. Their opponents accused them, however, of being akin to such antinomian groups as

[25] Etkes, *Yahid*, 105–8; Rosman, *Founder*, 38–9; cf. M. Piekarz, "The Impetus for Anti-Hasidic Polemics" [Hebrew], in Immanuel Etkes, David Asaf, Israel Bartal, and Joseph Dan, eds., *Be-Ma'agalei Hasidim* [Within Hasidic Circles] (Jerusalem, 2000), 3–20.

[26] Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 96–7.

Sabbateans and Frankists, introducing heretical ideas and practices into Judaism – certainly more egregious than merely modifying the style of Hasidism.

The vindictive actions of the Gaon, the Vilna and Brody community ban declarations, and other negative reactions, including a booklet of anti-Hasidic writings called *Zemir Aritzim ve-Ḥarvot Tzurim*, came as a shock to the Hasidim. Even before the Gaon issued his formal condemnation, two leading Hasidim, Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk and Shneur Zalman of Ladi, tried to meet with him to prove their *bona fides* as advocates of traditional belief and practice. To no avail; he refused to receive them.[27] Once the anti-Hasidic actions of 1772 began, the Magid of Mezerich decided to act.

He called a meeting at his residence in Rowne of all of his disciples, including those who had already set up autonomous courts of their own, to consider the ramifications of the early bans against them and to formulate a collective response. This was in effect the founding meeting of the Hasidic *movement*, though not in an organizational sense. As far as we know, no organizational machinery was planned or constructed. It was, however, the first time that the Magid and his disciples demonstrated a group consciousness, acted in concert (by meeting all together in one place), deliberated over a common policy and even gave vent to tensions between various factions, since some Hasidim resented being identified with the behavior of others.[28]

At the Magid's urging, they apparently decided not to fight the *mitnagdim* in an overt or direct way (although Hasidim did try to destroy all copies of *Zemir Aritzim ve-Ḥarvot Tzurim*), but rather to concentrate on strengthening the Magid's followers and their collective vision of Hasidism.[29]

The opposition to Hasidim waxed and waned over the next thirty years or so with bans, book burnings, and even violence. Both sides occasionally attempted to draft the power of the non-Jewish authorities to deal a fatal blow to the enemy. The death of their chief antagonist, the Gaon (in 1797), and a Russian law of 1804 implying the basic legality of Hasidism did much to reduce the tensions, as did the rise a generation later of a common enemy, Haskalah (Jewish enlightenment).[30]

It should also be understood that tension was not to be found everywhere and always. While Hasidim and *mitnagdim* often jockeyed for power within the same community (as reflected by the identity of the

[27] Etkes, *Yaḥid*, 109–17. [28] Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 98–9, 135.
[29] Etkes, *Yaḥid*, 118–20; Pedaya, "Model," 319–20; Wilensky, *Hasidim*, 34.
[30] Wilensky, *Hasidim*, vols. I–II; Dubnow, *Toldot*, 138–69, 242–89.

rabbi, the *shoḥet*, and the members of the *kahal* ["communal governing council"]), competition between Hasidic and non-Hasidic camps did not necessarily preclude peaceful coexistence and even mutual respect and cooperation. The twin communities of Pinsk–Karlin and the careers of the Hasidic figures Levi Isaac (eventually "of Berdichev") and Solomon of Karlin offer good examples of this, and there are others.[31]

EARLY PATTERNS OF GEOGRAPHIC EXPANSION AND LEADERSHIP

The Magid died in December, 1772. The two generations after his death were marked by geographic expansion of the new Hasidic groups together with the testing out of alternative styles of organization, leadership, and succession. The activities of the Magid's disciples and other important figures – and those of their immediate successors – did not fully converge into established patterns of organization, routines of behavior, and standard institutions until the third generation of leaders after the Magid was in place (*c.* 1820).

For example, the other two leading associates of the Ba'al Shem Tov, Pinḥas of Koretz and Jacob Joseph, who survived the Magid, persisted in their elitist ways, shunning the Magid's tactics of founding a court, active recruitment of young men, and significant expansion of the numbers of their adherents.[32]

Pinḥas was explicit in his criticism of the Magid's spiritualistic doctrines and stress on ecstatic prayer, preferring to emphasize sincere faith, inner devotion, and ethical behavior. As his son and grandsons became notable printers, but not rebbes, his influence continued primarily in the citation by others of his ideas and sayings and the stories told about him.[33]

Jacob Joseph's relations with the Magid also reflected tensions between the two men. These continued among some of their disciples and can be detected in the formation of the 1814 collection of legendary stories about the Besht and his associates, *Shivḥei ha-Besht*, with distinct clusters of stories featuring each leader separately. In light of Jacob Joseph's rivalry with the Magid, it is interesting that the number of stories in which he is the main protagonist is exceeded only by those where that role is filled by

[31] M. Nadav, *The Jews of Pinsk, 1506–1880* (Stanford, 2008), 294–9; cf. Isaiah Kuperstein, "Inquiry at Polaniec: A Case Study of a Hassidic Controversy in 18th Century Galicia," *Bar-Ilan* 24–5 (1989), 25–39; S. Ettinger, "Hasidism and the *Kahal* in Eastern Europe," in Rapoport-Albert, ed., *Hasidism Reappraised*, 63–75.

[32] Heschel, *Circle*, 19–34; Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 91, 135.

[33] D. Assaf, "Shapira Family," in *YEJEE*, I, 1701–2.

the Besht himself; while those about the Magid are much fewer.[34] Jacob Joseph is best known for his homiletical writings which, beginning in 1780, were edited into the first Hasidic books. These laid the foundation for essential Hasidic doctrines and practices.[35]

The Magid's son, Abraham the Angel (ha-Mal'akh), was even less involved in cultivating the Magid's style of organization than Pinḥas and Jacob Joseph. He was a retiring kabbalist who played no public role and died at the age of 36. His son, Shalom Shakhnah, son–in-law of Menaḥem Naḥum of Chernobyl (an associate of the Besht), did establish a court and, due to his distinguished lineage, enjoyed a respectable following among Hasidim in northern Ukraine. He died even younger than his father, at 33, but set the precedent of the *tzaddik* living in a "regal manner," enjoying the finer material things in life. His son, Israel (1796–1850), who became the *tzaddik* at the age of 16, personified the regal style of behavior, enjoying legendary wealth and living an opulent lifestyle at his court in Ruzhin which he based on reliable financial resources and sound management practices, vastly expanding its influence by attracting thousands of followers. Due to accusations that he was involved in the murder of two Jewish informers (which resulted in some time in jail and restrictions on his Hasidic activities by the Russian authorities in Ukraine), he eventually moved the court to Sadigora in Bukovina (then, Austrian Galicia; today Romania). He matched his children with scions of the leading Hasidic families of the day.[36]

Two of the Magid's disciples who did not establish Hasidic courts of their own were Menaḥem Naḥum (Reb Naḥum) of Chernobyl (1730?–97) and Levi Isaac of Berdichev (*c*. 1740–1809). Reb Naḥum eked out a poor living as his community's preacher, often traveling to speak in other towns. His reputation rests primarily on his two posthumous books, *Me'or Einaim* and *Yismah Lev* (both Slavuta, 1798) and was perpetuated through the prodigious, successful organizational work of his son Mordecai (Reb Motele) (1770?–1837) and the influence of his many grandsons and later descendants who established Hasidic courts throughout Ukraine and

[34] E. Reiner, "*Shivḥei ha-Besht*: Transmission, Editing, Printing," in *Proceedings of the 11th World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. C2 (Jerusalem, 1994) [Hebrew], 145–52; cf. Etkes, *Besht*, 228–30.

[35] Dresner, *Zaddik*; Z. Gries, *Sefer, Sofer ve-Sippur be-Reishit ha-Hasidut* [The Book in Early Hasidism] (Tel Aviv, 1992), 54–6; cf. I. Etkes, "The Zaddik: The Interrelationship between Religious Doctrine and Social Organization," in Rapoport-Albert, ed., *Hasidism Reappraised*, 159–67.

[36] D. Assaf, *The Regal Way: The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin* (Stanford, 2002), esp. 31–6, 213–20.

constituted one of the main lines of Hasidic dynasties in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[37]

Levi Isaac functioned as an official communal rabbi in Zelechow, Pinsk, and Berdichev. The fact is that, during the period of the rise of the *mitnagdim* in Vilna and elsewhere, and despite their attempts to force the Pinsk elders to dismiss him, Levi Isaac remained as rabbi of Pinsk for ten years (1775–85), serving Jews of all stripes there. It was only in 1784 that the pressure from the Gaon and the *mitnagdim* of Vilna became so intense that the Pinsk community finally acquiesced and let him go in the following year.[38]

Levi Isaac did participate in a 1781 debate defending Hasidism against the *mitnaged* rabbi of Brest-Litovsk, Abraham Katznellenbogen, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century he also apparently convened a meeting of important Jewish leaders (not just Hasidim) in Ukraine to formulate a common policy in response to new Russian initiatives regarding Jewish status. Levi Isaac promulgated the *hanhagot* ("moral conduct instruction") of the Magid in manuscript and also published his own book, *Kedushat Levi* (part 1) (Slavuta, 1798), during his lifetime. Based on his efforts to ameliorate conditions for the Jews in heaven and on earth, a rich folklore developed depicting him as comforter of the afflicted and defender of the Jewish People before God.[39]

Of the leaders who set up Hasidic communities of their own during the Magid's lifetime, Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk and Abraham of Kalisk left Belarus in 1777 at the head of a group of Hasidim bound for the Land of Israel. They attempted to guide their communities back home by correspondence from afar, but eventually their efforts broke down. Their *'aliyah* ("migration") laid the foundation for several Hasidic communities in the Land of Israel, while in Belarus there was a wave of defections by "Lithuanian" (Belarusan) Hasidim to Hasidic leaders in other areas. Gradually, by 1788 when Menaḥem Mendel died, the dominant Hasidic figure in Jewish Lithuania became Shneur Zalman of Ladi (*c.* 1745–1812).[40]

[37] P. Radensky, "Chernobil Dynasty," in *YEJEE*, I, 313–14; G. Sagiv, *Ha-Shoshelet: Bet Chernobil u-Mekomo be-Toldot ha-Hasidut* [Dynasty: The Chernobyl Hasidic Dynasty and its Place in the History of Hasidism] (Jerusalem, 2014).

[38] Nadav, *Pinsk*, 301–4; cf. S. H. Dresner, *Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev: Portrait of a Hasidic Master* (New York, 1986); Y. Petrovsky-Shtern, "The Drama of Berdichev: Levi Yitshak and His Town," *Polin* 17 (2004), 83–95.

[39] Gries, *Hanhagot*, 111–24; Y. Halperin, "R. Levi Yitzhak of Berditshev and the Governmental Decrees in His Days" [Hebrew], in Halperin, *Yehudim ve-Yahadut be-Mizrah 'Eiropa* [Eastern European Jewry] (Jerusalem, 1969), 340–7; Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 120–1; Wilensky, *Hasidim*, I, 122–31.

[40] Y. Barnai, *Igrot Hasidim mei-'Eretz Yisrael* [Letters of Hasidim from the Land of Israel] (Jerusalem, 1980); I. Etkes, "Shneur Zalman of Ladi's Rise to Leadership" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 54 (1985), 429–39; I. Halpern, *Ha-Aliyot ha-Rishonot Shel ha-Hasidim le-'Eretz*

Shneur Zalman founded a court in Liozna to which more than a thousand sometimes flocked, and became the center of the approach to Hasidism known as *Ḥabad* (an acronym for *Ḥokhmah* ["wisdom"], *Binah* ["understanding"], *Da`at* ["knowledge"] – three expressions of consciousness of the soul in Kabbalah). He publicized his systematic ideas on such doctrines as the radical immanence of God and how, under the *tzaddik*'s guidance, most people could reach a desirable religious standing, albeit lower than the *tzaddik*'s. Shneur Zalman and his version of Hasidism became so popular that he had to publish rules in an attempt to regulate the visits of the Hasidim to his court and the order of preference for audiences with him. There also were Habad communities established in other locales in Belarus and beyond, which Shneur Zalman supervised through the use of handpicked local leaders and emissaries who reproduced his teachings and conveyed his instructions.[41]

Shneur Zalman was involved in the defense of Hasidism from the onset of the opposition in 1772. *Mitnagdim* twice denounced him to the Russian authorities (in 1798 and 1801), supposedly for attempting to start a new religion and for disloyalty to the regime. He was arrested, interrogated, and released both times. He died as a refugee in December of 1812 during Napoleon's attack on Russia.[42]

For several years afterwards, the fate of Habad and the form of its leadership were in question. Some of the Habad Hasidim believed that, with the death of the leader, they should disband and find other *tzaddikim* to attach themselves to. Others advocated staying together united by the great leader's legacy, without replacing him. The dominant position came to be that a new leader should be chosen; but here there was a struggle between Shneur Zalman's chief disciple, Aaron ha-Levi Horowitz of Staroszele, and his oldest son, Dov Ber of Lubavitch. Dov Ber won out and, as happened eventually with many Hasidic courts, the hereditary succession principle took root.[43]

The third of the Magid's disciples who established a center during his lifetime was Aaron ha-Gadol [the Great] of Karlin (1736–72).[44] He was deeply mystical, personally ascetic, and advocated a wild ecstasy during prayer. His success in spreading the Hasidic style widely in Belarus is

Yisrael [The First Migrations of the Hasidim to the Land of Israel] (Jerusalem, 1947); N. Karlinsky, *Historia she-ke-Neged* [Counter History] (Jerusalem, 1998).

41 I. Etkes, "Shneur Zalman of Ladi's Style as a Hasidic Leader" [Hebrew], *Zion* 50 (1985), 321–54.

42 Y. Mondshine, "The Two Incarcerations of Shneur Zalman of Ladi in Light of New Documents" [Hebrew], *Kerem Habad* 4a (1992), 17–108.

43 Rosman, *Founder*, 189–203, and bibliography cited there.

44 W. Z. Rabinowitsch, *Lithuanian Hasidism* (New York, 1971), 8–120.

reflected in the fact, already noted above, that *mitnagdim* in many places often used the term "Karliner" in referring dismissively to members of the Hasidism they opposed.

Dying at the young age of 36, Aaron was replaced by his close disciple Solomon ben Meir of Karlin (1738–92) who, like Levi Isaac, was eventually forced to leave Pinsk–Karlin. By 1784 he had relocated to Wlodzimierz in Volynia where, upon his death, his son became the *tzaddik*. Another two of his disciples, Mordecai of Lakhovich and Uri of Strelisk, also set up independent Hasidic courts.

In the meantime, the now grown son of Aaron, Asher Perlov (1765–1826), had returned to Belarus and reclaimed his father's position at the head of the Hasidim in the Polesie region, establishing his court in Stolin. He was renowned as a miracle worker, detested by *mitnagdim*, denounced by them, and arrested in 1798. After his release, he regained his father's headquarters in Karlin where he remained for the rest of his life. His successor as *tzaddik* was his son Aaron (II) Perlov of Karlin (1802–72). It was under his leadership that the Karlin–Stolin court experienced its great boost in popularity and influence.

Disciples of the Magid who founded courts after his death were Ḥayim Ḥaykl of Amdur (d. 1787) and Elimelekh of Lizhensk (1717–86). Ḥayim Ḥaykl, who had been close to both Aaron of Karlin and the Magid, faced fierce opposition by the *mitnagdim* of his area. He further developed the court model as established by the Magid, described above (see "From Circle to Court" above). His teachings emphasized the intermediary role of the *tzaddik*, quietism, and the importance of religiously inspired joy. His son Samuel succeeded him as *tzaddik*, but the court disbanded about a decade after Ḥayim's death.[45]

Elimelekh detailed the role and nature of the *tzaddik*, believing that he should be responsible not only for the spiritual welfare of his Hasidim but also their material well-being (*banei, ḥayei u-mezonei* ["children, health, and livelihood"]). His own dynasty petered out after two more generations as most of his followers were attracted to the courts of his disciples. These men were the first disseminators of Hasidism in Poland (Jacob Isaac Horowitz of Lancut, later called the "*Ḥozeh* ["Seer"] of Lublin"; Israel, the Magid of Kozhenits [Kozienice]; Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apt [Opatow]) and Galicia (Menaḥem Mendel of Rimanov [Rymanow]; Naftali Horowitz of Ropshits [Ropczyce]; Zvi Hirsh of Zhidachov [Zydaczow]).[46]

[45] Ibid., 121–49; Etkes, "Court," 170–82; Pedaya, "Model," 340–5; Wilensky, *Hasidim*, II, 160–3.

[46] G. Dynner, *Men of Silk* (Oxford, 2006), 25–53; Etkes, "Zaddik," 165–7; A. Green, "Elimelekh of Lizhensk," in *YEJEE*, I, 467–8.

Naḥman of Bratzlav (Yiddish: Breslov) in Ukraine was the great-grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov through his mother, and the grandson of Naḥman of Horodenka through his father. After his 1798–9 transformative journey to Eretz Israel, he became convinced of his own supreme spiritual standing and assumed messianic pretensions. He was critical of other Hasidic leaders and preached that being embroiled in constant controversy was one sign of a true *tzaddik*. Unlike some Hasidic leaders, he demanded of his followers exacting religious behavior. He believed that not joy but constant painful struggle was the way to bring God into one's life. In addition to sermons, Naḥman attempted to inspire his Hasidim to greater spiritual fulfillment by telling stories that combined standard folk motifs with kabbalistic symbols.[47]

Naḥman 's followers were never numerous but they were highly visible and subject not only to controversy but to frequent persecution on the part of other Hasidic groups. When Naḥman died, his followers, like those of other deceased Hasidic leaders, were tempted to disband and find new courts to join. Thanks to the assiduous efforts of his disciple, scribe, and interpreter, Natan Sternhartz, the group stayed together, without, however, choosing a new leader. Natan promulgated Naḥman's teachings orally and in print, recruited new members, and originated the practice of the annual Rosh Hashanah gathering of the Bratzlav Hasidim at the rabbi's last court and burial location in Uman. He never formally assumed the role of rebbe and the continuing practice of the absence of an official *tzaddik* earned the Bratzlavers the sardonic sobriquet "the *toyte* ["dead"] Hasidim."[48]

THE MATURING MOVEMENT

Seen as a whole, the period following the Magid's death (1772 – *c.* 1820) is notable as a time of non-linear, hesitant transition from Hasidism as a loosely associated, pluralistic collection of a relatively few, small, simply organized, ephemeral groups, barely distinguishable from conventional mystical ascetic conventicles. It evolved into a self-conscious, non-centralized, non-bureaucratic, still relatively pluralist confederation comprising an ever-increasing number of tightly knit, expanding, highly organized groups.[49]

[47] A. Green, *Tormented Master* (New York, 1981).

[48] M. Piekarz, *Hasidut Breslov* [Studies in Bratzlav Hasidism] (Jerusalem, 1995); Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 113–19; D. Assaf, *Ne'eḥaz ba-Svakh* [Caught in the Thicket] (Jerusalem, 2006), 179–234. For extensive bibliography on R. Naḥman and his Hasidim, see Assaf, *Breslov: Bibliographia Mu'eret* [Bratzlav: An Annotated Bibliography] (Jerusalem, 2000).

[49] Cf. Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 103–4, 109, 126–40.

During the transition period, there were choices to be made: elitist restricted groups or open groups, disbanding after the death of the leader or continuing as a group, appointing a new leader or spiritually living off the legacy of the founder, succession according to the hereditary principle or on some other basis. The problem of financing the court had to be solved and the contours of the relationship between *tzaddik* and Hasidim had to be limned.

By the 1820s, certain patterns were established.[50] The importance of *yiḥus* ("genealogical pedigree") became paramount. When the *tzaddik* died, the group generally did remain united, with the new leader being chosen according to the dynastic hereditary principle. There could be more than one suitable contender; losers – with or without agreement of the winner – sometimes started breakaway courts and new subdynasties. When the heir was a child, he was usually crowned as a child-*tzaddik* (*yanuka*) with his mother or another relative serving as regent until he reached maturity.

Most courts were open to all comers and emphasized the spiritual potential in every person. This could be realized in particular through the proper style of prayer, which varied from court to court. *Tzaddikim* typically sought to multiply the number of their adherents. The rebbe might maintain contact – and discipline – through the pilgrimage system, emissaries, writings, and occasional personal visits himself to centers of his Hasidim removed from the court. There was a staff at the court (*mekoravim*) to ensure its smooth functioning. Long-term court residents (*yoshvim*) provided a core group of insiders who set the tone and could serve as spokesmen and court representatives when they eventually went back to their home communities.[51]

Hasidim owed their rebbe their loyalty and their love. They were obligated to support him through the remittance of the *ma'amad* tax (annual dues) and the *pidyon* payment when visiting the court. They could look forward to occasional *yeḥides* ("personal audiences" with the holy man), and could always feel that he was working for their best spiritual and/or material interests. They were to live by his teachings and practice whatever special ritual customs he favored. They could look forward to peak occasions when they would gather in large numbers at the court.

Within these general guidelines, there was much flexibility, variety, and room for exceptions. Some rebbes saw their role as taking responsibility

[50] Assaf, *Regal Way*; Dynner, *Men of Silk*; N. Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite* (Chicago, 1990); P. I. Radensky, "Hasidism in the Age of Reform" (doctoral diss., Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, 2001); Sagiv, *Ha-Shoshelet*; A. Teller, "Hasidism and the Challenge of Geography: The Polish Background to the Spread of the Hasidic Movement," *AJS Review* 30 (2006), 1–29.

[51] See Assaf, *Regal Way*, and the sources cited in note 21 above.

for – and having authority over – every facet of their followers' lives. Others limited themselves to advising and guiding. Some promoted ecstatic prayer, others abhorred it. Some pursued the "regal" lifestyle, others lived modestly and even abstemiously. Some taught through formal sermons and lessons, others by folksy stories and pithy epigrams. Some relied heavily on song and dance as religious tools, others less so. The list goes on.[52]

As alluded to in the survey of the various leaders in the previous section ("Early Patterns of Geographic Expansion and Leadership"), each *tzaddik* usually developed characteristic doctrines or emphasized a few signature concepts and developed his own particular style in observing certain customs. All of this distinguished him, and his followers, from the other groups, and could appeal to particular segments of the Jewish (male) population.

Women were relegated almost entirely to passive support and facilitative roles in Hasidism of this period. Although a common criticism of rebbes was that they fraternized with women, in Hasidic terms women were ancillary to what was in a profound sense a men's club. There were circumstances in which some women might come to the court or request a *yeḥides* meeting with the *tzaddik*. A few wealthy women, like Temerl Sonenberg-Bergson, lent important financial backing to some rebbes. The *tzaddik*'s wife, the rebbetzin, might serve him in an advisory role and be delegated responsibilities at the court. The most powerful role a woman could occupy was that of mother (and regent) to a *yanuka*. Widows of *tzaddikim* could also fill the role of respected dowager rebbetzin (rabbi's wife) wielding significant moral authority over the succession process and matters of the court.[53]

THE INTELLECTUAL–PSYCHOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

At the same time that the Hasidic groups were testing alternative forms of organization and styles of leadership, some Hasidic thinkers were occupied

[52] See Assaf, "Hasidism," in *YEJEE*.

[53] A. Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," in Rapaport-Albert and S. J. Zipperstein, eds., *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky* (London, 1988), 495–525; N. Polen, "Miriam's Dance: Radical Egalitarianism in Hasidic Thought," *Modern Judaism* 12 (1992), 1–21; Polen, "Rebbetzins, Wonder-Children, and the Emergence of the Dynastic Principle in Hasidism," in Steven T. Katz, ed., *The Shtetl: New Evaluations* (New York, 2007), 53–84; M. Rosman, "Observations on Women and Hasidism" [Hebrew], in Assaf and Rapoport-Albert, eds., *Yashan Mipnei Hadash*, 151–64; S. Stampfer, "The Impact of Hasidism on the Jewish Family in Eastern Europe: Towards a Re-Evaluation" [Hebrew], in Assaf and Rapoport-Albert, eds., *Yashan Mipnei Ḥadash*, 165–84; M. Wodzinski, "Women and Hasidism: A 'Non-Sectarian' Perspective," *Jewish History* 27 (2013), 399–444.

with a different kind of challenge. The opposition to the Hasidim that emerged in the 1770s charged that they had created a new, illegitimate form of Hasidism. Was this true? Did they form a distinctive group with its own religious and social identity? Was this group really new and therefore illegitimate? What authority was it based on? What textual foundation did it have?

Beginning in the 1780s, books appeared that explained – most of all to the Hasidim themselves – what Hasidism was all about, what its doctrines were, and why it was legitimate. While virtually all of these books bear the name of some prominent *tzaddik* as their author, most of them were actually edited and anthologized excerpts of the "author's" oral or written teachings compiled by disciples or sons and offered as a means of communicating to the Hasidic public or some other audience.[54]

A good example of this is one of the first Hasidic books, *Magid Devarav le-Ya'akov: Likutei Amarim*, published in 1781 in Koretz. The named author of this book is Dov Ber, the Magid of Mezerich. The contents were not, however, actually written by him. Rather, the editor, the Magid's disciple Solomon Lutzker, gathered several versions of the Magid's oral Yiddish teachings as recalled, translated into Hebrew, and written down by various disciples. From this raw material, he excerpted and anthologized a book, presented as the Magid's statement of his doctrines.

Lutzker's objective in creating this book was to demonstrate by its contents the great wisdom, traditional nature – and hence legitimacy – of the Besht and the Magid and their teachings – and, by implication, of Hasidism.[55]

"I wrote down all of this so that all of God's people should know that . . . He has sent us great *tzaddikim* who know the secrets of the heart to inspire us even today." Of course, the *tzaddikim* he was referring to were the leaders of Hasidism.

In addition, Lutzker posited a perspective from which he thought Hasidism should be understood. After discussing the kabbalistic works attributed to Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai, and those authored by Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria (the Ari), and how they laid the foundation for the knowledge of Kabbalah, he noted:

Due to our sins the generations have been ever degenerating, hearts have diminished and this wisdom [Kabbalah] has been almost forgotten . . . until, thanks to

[54] Z. Gries, "The Hasidic Managing Editor as an Agent of Culture," in Rapoport-Albert, ed., *Hasidism Reappraised*, 141–55.

[55] See M. Rosman, texts and presentation at http://www.earlymodern.org/workshops/2009/emw2009.pdf and www.earlymodern.org/workshops/2009/videos.php; cf. Piekarz, "Impetus," 12–14.

God's pity on us, the light of Israel gleamed, that is the divine holy rabbi Israel Besht ... With every gesture, movement, word and action, he revealed the precious source of the glory of this wisdom. On every jot and tittle [he explained] mounds and mounds of the customs of the upper world and its unification with the lower world ... Thus his commentary will appear in the contents of this book.

Lutzker then went on to affirm that the Magid explicated many passages and ideas in the classic kabbalistic books and inspired many disciples to true service of God.

All of this was to assert that Hasidism was the continuation of the hallowed mystical tradition which itself was an extension of the Torah. It began with Shimon bar Yoḥai, was entrusted to Cordovero, the Ari, and then to the Besht and his disciples, like the Magid, and in turn to his disciples. The Besht's role was not to be a faith-healing *ba'al shem*, but to revive the dying kabbalistic tradition. He was essentially the foremost scholar and exponent of Kabbalah of his era and it was his authentic mystical teachings (mediated by the Magid) that the Hasidic disciples whom he and the Magid taught were now (in 1781) disseminating. Hasidism, then, was just the latest incarnation of Kabbalah.

Texts such as this one lend a glimpse into the process of the framing of Hasidism as a legitimate articulation of mysticism (and Judaism) and of the Besht and the Magid as founder and successor leaders of the movement that was taking shape in the last third of the eighteenth century. Taken collectively, many of the books published during this period constituted a sanctified canon that lent an aura of authority and provided a textual basis for the doctrines being taught (such as the various articulations of the doctrine of the *tzaddik*).[56] They also anachronistically crystallized the founding roles of Israel Ba'al Shem Tov and Dov Ber the Great Magid in the movement,[57] as well as proving them to be important Kabbalah scholars and mystics. The books were an answer to opponents and a tool for convincing scholarly types, accustomed to gaining their knowledge from books, to attach themselves to Hasidic courts. They also were a resource for Hasidic teachers to draw on when seeking to reinforce the faith of their followers.

[56] Cf. M. Altshuler, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism* (Leiden, 2006); R. Elior, *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism* (Oxford, 2006); Etkes, "Zaddik," 159–67; A. Green, "The Zaddiq as Axis Mundi in Later Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45 (1977), 328–47; M. Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany, 1995); R. Margolin, *Mikdash Adam* [The Human Temple] (Jerusalem, 2005); R. Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism* (Princeton, 1993).

[57] Cf. Rapoport-Albert, "1772," 80–101, 109–11, 119–26, which supports this view, and Etkes, *Besht*, 249–58, which at least partially opposes it.

HASIDISM AND MODERNIZATION

Hasidism is usually thought of as anti-modern because of its formal rejection of modernist thinking and ideology and its active resistance to secularization. If modernization is measured, however, not by declared beliefs and simplistic devotion to a few ideals but by engagement with and accommodation to the deep processes of modernity (including secularization), then I submit that Hasidism was one of the most successful Jewish modernization movements. This admittedly flies in the face of most analysis (both scholarly and popular) of the career of Hasidism. I ask the reader to read on with an open mind.

Hasidism was characterized by some of the prominent markers of Jewish modernization. For example, modernization was contingent upon the development of new secular sources of cultural authority and new venues where it could be applied: science replaced tradition, the newspaper trumped the sermon, the lecture hall instead of the *yeshiva*, the café table rather than the Sabbath table, etc.[58] Hasidism also offered new sources of authority and new venues for their exercise. The *tzaddik* could replace both the rabbi and the *parnas* ("communal elder"), usurping the spiritual authority of the first and controlling, from behind the scenes, the secular authority of the second. The *tzaddik*'s court gave Jews a new opportunity for pilgrimage and spiritual renewal. The Hasidic *shtibel* ("prayer hall") rivaled the synagogue; the rebbe's *tish* ("Sabbath table gathering") could come at the expense of the family one.[59]

In addition to transformation of cultural authority, Jewish modernization meant new kinds of political authority and new ways in which it was organized. As governments came to abolish the traditional *kehillah*'s authority, the modern Jewish community had to metamorphose into a voluntary association. Hasidism was a participant in this trend. While the traditional community was still viable, Hasidim launched largely successful strategies for dominating it wherever Hasidism was strong.[60] At the same time, the system of the *tzaddik*'s court with far-flung, non-contiguous collections of Hasidim who gladly offered their holy man leader their financial support and loyalty, is a model of voluntary community. Its pattern of a headquarters (the court) that communicates in various ways with a diffuse membership, with occasional field visits by the leaders and large central gatherings of the rank and file, is typical of modern

[58] Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2004), 2.

[59] Cf. M. Wodzinski, "How Modern is an Anti-Modernist Movement?" *AJS Review* 31 (2007), 221–40.

[60] Dynner, *Men of Silk*, 55–88; D. Assaf and I. Bartal, "Politicking and Orthodoxy: Polish Rebbes Meet Modern Times" [Hebrew], in R. Elior, Israel Bartal, and Chone Shmeruk, eds., *Zaddikim ve-Anshei Ma'aseh: Meḥkarim be-Hasidut Polin* [Studies in Polish Hasidism] (Jerusalem, 1994), 65–90.

organizations. Furthermore, as the official political mediating role of the traditional community was abrogated, Hasidim found new ways to communicate and negotiate as a collective with the state bureaucracy. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Hasidim were even developing a talent for local electoral politics.[61]

Economically, as the Jewish community lost the power of taxation, new ways had to be found to finance communal functions. The Hasidim responded to this new circumstance by cultivating philanthropy: the voluntary annual *ma'amad* tax, the *pidyonot* which were individual occasional donations to the *tzaddik*, and large-scale contributions from *nouveau-riche* adherents who were rewarded with the prestige of a direct relationship with the *tzaddik*.

Perhaps we should regard mature Hasidism as originating the most successful nineteenth-century Jewish modernizing strategy. Measured in terms of economic power, number of followers, geographic spread, political influence, and the ability to maintain and perpetuate itself, Hasidism seems to have flourished and grown under the conditions of modernity more than any other contemporary Jewish group.

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[61] Dynner, *Men of Silk*, 78–90; Assaf and Bartal, "Politicking"; M. Wodzinski, "Hasidism, 'Shtadlanut' and Jewish Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland: The Case of Isaac of Warka," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95 (2005), 295–320; R. Manekin, "Politics, Religion and National Identity: The Galician Jewish Vote in the 1873 Parliamentary Elections," *Polin* 12 (1999), 100–19; Andrzej Zabikowski, "The Jewish Community in Cracow, 1869–1914: The By-Laws and Balance of Power in the Communal Establishment" [Hebrew], in E. Reiner, ed., *Kruke-Kazimierz-Krakow* [Studies in the History of Krakow Jewry] (Tel Aviv, 2001), 119–30.

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CHAPTER 24

ENLIGHTENMENT AND HASKALAH

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INTRODUCTION: ISSUES OF SCOPE AND DEFINITION

The common translation of Haskalah as "the Jewish Enlightenment" generally assumes a self-evident notion of what we mean by "Enlightenment" and posits the Jewish case as a particular manifestation of the general European phenomenon, duly qualified with requisite historical caveats and particularities. The Enlightenment, along these lines, is characterized by the positive valuation of scientific and humanistic knowledge and rational discourse, a new appreciation for the role and process of education, and an eschewal of religious dogmatism and superstition. These qualities were held together by an unfettered optimism that celebrated the potential possibilities of human progress. For its part, the Haskalah, which emerged in German-speaking lands in the 1760s and 1770s, is depicted as a movement that brought about a Jewish cultural renaissance and reshaped the social and religious patterns of Jewish life. This Jewish Enlightenment is thus described in terms of its promotion of scientific and humanistic knowledge as well as the efforts that stressed the value and importance of vernacular (i.e. German) literacy. These cultural and intellectual commitments, in turn, fueled a determined effort to reform Jewish education by rejecting the traditional focus on rabbinic texts in favor of subjects of more universal (read: European) value. The *maskilim*, as proponents of the Haskalah are called, are also noted for their disparagement of pietistic religiosity and their eschewal of rabbinic obscurantism. As such, the Haskalah is neatly pegged as the particular Jewish national-religious manifestation of the other European Enlightenments, with its attendant embrace of reason, an emphasis on well-ordered education and dissemination of knowledge, the eschewal of various forms of religious *mysterium*, and a desire to limit clerical authority.

There are a number of ways in which this chapter will seek to attenuate and qualify this approach to the subject of Enlightenment and Haskalah. One may begin by noting the now well-rooted appreciation for the distinct national and religious character of various European Enlightenments, and

the attendant need to temper the way in which scholars cast these particular Enlightenments in light of the presumed characteristics of some overarching phenomenon.[1] At the same time, the manifold transformations of Jewish life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe highlighted elsewhere in this volume undercut the notion of the Haskalah as a radical break with the Jewish realities of early modern Europe. Jewish awareness of and interest in scientific and humanistic studies was not new to the eighteenth century. The shifting patterns of economic and social interaction among early modern Jews and non-Jews also predate the eighteenth century, further qualifying the view of the Haskalah as a harbinger of discontinuity and change. When we consider, finally, the clear propensity of the *maskilim* to embrace and valorize many aspects of medieval and early modern Jewish culture, it becomes evident that many of the supposed attributes of the Haskalah may be less directly derivative of the eighteenth-century Enlightenments than generally assumed. The variegated cultural and intellectual strands of early modern Jewish life, finely presented within the gradualist perspective of this volume, should direct us away from any over-identification of the Haskalah with other European Enlightenments.

The subject matter of this chapter needs to be carefully attenuated in yet another way. Implicitly and explicitly, the handling of Enlightenment and Haskalah is often fraught with what one might call a "progressivist" discourse, assuming the well-worn language of societal advancement and improvement, and making liberal reference to the rational, scientific, and secular nature of these phenomena.[2] Even when historians acknowledge that some of the leading *maskilim* sought to balance their enthusiasm for contemporary European culture with an abiding commitment to the traditional dictates of religion and revelation, the maskilic engagement with rabbinic and medieval Jewish scholarship is viewed as a "lingering" traditionalism, a compromise born of ambivalence or sentimentalism. The possibility of a principled and ideationally grounded embrace of Judaism and Jewish learning is thus diminished or marginalized. Much writing on the Haskalah utilizes the language of moderation and radicalization, in which the latter represents an uncompromising rationalism and universalism that significantly undercuts Jewish particularism. Vocabulary and presentation are, of course, crucial, for such "radicalization" can be construed either as a natural culmination of the essential tendencies of the Haskalah or as a distortion of its program.

[1] See Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981).

[2] See, e.g., Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2004).

This point, in turn, brings us to a historiographic observation that further underscores the challenges of our subject, namely that Jews of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did not have a singular or simple term with which to demarcate the very subject of this chapter. Neither the individuals who will serve as the subject of this chapter, nor those who followed them and wrote the first *wissenschaftlich* histories of Jews and Judaism, recognized the term "Haskalah" as denoting a distinct *historical* phenomenon. There were, to be sure, writers who used the word in a manner synonymous with "wisdom" or "knowledge," or more specifically with "education" or "philosophy," and one can also cite discussions that paralleled broader German attempts to define what was meant by *Aufklärung*; none of those sources, however, define in clear or direct terms the contours and scope of this historical moment.[3] While the *maskilim*, to restate this somewhat differently, can be shown to have a great degree of self-awareness, this did not translate itself into a clear historical self-definition. Historians naturally adduce patterns and trends and delineate historical phenomena regardless of the degree of self-conscious awareness, but we must also be duly careful to note that the lines we draw with regard to the Haskalah are less evident and distinct than we often make them out to be.

Some final words are in order on the geographic and chronological scope of this chapter. Given that this volume takes as its *terminus ad quem* the first or second decade of the nineteenth century, this essay will accordingly focus on a half-century of Jewish texts and ideas, from the 1760s to the 1810s. This chronological delimitation is conjoined with a geographical demarcation, namely a focus on the predominantly German-speaking lands of Europe. One may argue for broader geographical inclusion, one that might include developments in Italy or Holland and which would take into consideration a Haskalah other than the German-Jewish one. But insofar as our chapter moves away from defining the Haskalah in terms of the broad cultural and intellectual transformations of eighteenth-century Jewish life – developments which, as already stated, are well attested in early modern Jewry – it will seek to explore the complex relationship between Enlightenment and Haskalah with reference to a particular set of issues and challenges that play out in the general confines of Germanic

[3] See, e.g., Moses Mendelssohn, *Be'ur Millot ha-Higgayon* (1765), in *Moses Mendelssohn Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, 24 vols. (Stuttgart, 1971–2004), XIV, 29; Mendelssohn, *Megillat Kohelet* (1770), in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, XIV, 154; Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Sefer ha-Midot, ve-hu' Sefer Musar Haskel* (Berlin, 1787) 36a–*36b*, 45b; [Isaac Euchel], "Introduction," *Ha-Me'assef* 4 (1787–8), unpaginated [i–xiv]; Judah Leib Ben Ze'ev, *'Otzar ha-Shorashim* (Vienna, 1807), unpaginated preface [vi]. See also Uzi Shavit, "Ha-'Haskalah' ma-Hi? Le-Birur Musag ha-'Haskalah' be-Sifrut ha-'Ivrit," *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-Sifrut 'Ivrit* 12 (1990), 61–77.

Europe. The Haskalah discussed here is thus a circumscribed and even particularized phenomenon, but it affords a more precise and nuanced understanding of this historical moment.

LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION AS CULTURAL TOUCHSTONES

Perhaps the most important hallmark of the Haskalah was the considerable attention devoted to questions of language and education. Until the mid eighteenth century, central European Jews generally lived with exposure to three languages. Hebrew remained the language of Jewish ritual, liturgy, and text-study, and, for an educated elite, the language of scholarship and communication. As the "holy tongue," Hebrew was accorded pride of place, but the reality was that few Jews studied the language systematically and had a true mastery of it. Jewish scholars of early modern Europe complained about this and decried the inability of many Jews to comprehend the Hebrew Bible fully, yet Jewish schools and communities did little to address this failing, and little changed. At the same time, economic and social exigencies meant that Jews needed a grasp of local vernaculars, and some small number of Jews even attained respectable levels of literacy. This trend was accelerated by the new social and economic opportunities wrought by the eighteenth century, with Jewish children increasingly exposed to European vernaculars, either informally or by private tutors. Central European Jews, finally, also maintained Yiddish as a primary familial and social language, with some informal religious use as well. In the eighteenth century, however, Yiddish – or at least written Yiddish – became fairly Germanicized, and the differences between the languages varied considerably.

Just after mid-century, there was a perceptible shift in Jewish attitudes and approaches to these languages. The first and most notable development was a renewed interest in Hebrew. When Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86) took up the subject of Hebrew language study in the 1750s, he repeated the well-worn early modern complaints regarding the neglect of Hebrew, but re-cast this failing in a contemporary light: "Let us learn from the other nations, each with their own national language; they neither rested nor reposed until they fully developed their language. Should we . . . not emulate their deeds with our own language, the finest in quality and most ancient in time?"[4] Cognizant of the linguistic advances made by various European vernaculars, Mendelssohn was

[4] *Kohelet Musar* (*c.* 1758), in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, XIV, 3–4.

bothered by the evident linguistic disparity between Jews and other Europeans. The failure to invest in the development of Hebrew, moreover, was indicative of a larger issue, and his call to coreligionists to demonstrate that "our language can be employed on all occasions"[5] – that is, employed in the writing of *belles-lettres* and popular philosophy and the like – was an attempt to reverse a perceived cultural apathy and inferiority in the face of broader European advances. For Mendelssohn, as for other eighteenth-century European thinkers (e.g. Etienne Bonnot de Condillac), the issue was predicated on a renewed appreciation of the inextricable – and universal – connection between language and thought.[6] His call for the study of the Hebrew language was thus a crucial part of a contemporary cultural awakening, although he never wavered from his insistence – amply demonstrated in his Hebrew writings – that he was merely reviving notions deeply embedded in pre-modern Jewish thought and cultural traditions.

In a parallel vein, Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805) set out to revitalize the study of biblical Hebrew. Wessely was born in Hamburg into a family of well-to-do businessmen and subsequently lived in Amsterdam and Copenhagen before settling in Berlin in 1774. Well-educated and deeply immersed in both classical Jewish learning and European arts and letters, Wessely was also exposed to the cultural variegation of European Jewry (including the Sephardim of Hamburg and Amsterdam) and to the shifting political and socio-economic landscape of western Europe. From this vantage point, Wessely grew increasingly sensitive to the disparities between the state of contemporary Jewish culture and the linguistic and cultural advances of western European societies. This appreciation propelled him to turn his attention to biblical Hebrew, and by the 1750s he began to work on an exhaustive multi-volume work that drew attention to the uniquely sublime and rich quality of the language. For Wessely, as for Mendelssohn, this was something of a classicizing move, based on a sincerely held conviction that the Sages of late antiquity – the consummate source of authority in post-biblical Judaism – "knew the principles of the language and understood the purity of its refined expressions."[7] He also insisted that, because Hebrew was the rabbinic key to unlocking Scripture, this language was also the scholarly key to understanding talmudic and midrashic exegesis properly, and, beyond that, the divine wisdom that lay

[5] Ibid., 5.

[6] See his introduction to *Be'ur Millot ha-Higgayon*, in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, XIV, 26.

[7] Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Lebanon ... ha-sefer ha-ri'shon shemo Gan Na'ul*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1765–6) I, 20b; see also 8b and 10a.

at the heart of Jewish teachings.[8] The sublime language of Hebrew Scripture, Wessely insisted, contained more profundity "than what a thousand books of philosophy and science – whose words are a mixture of truth and falsehood – could teach us."[9] He remained passionately committed to these ideas to the end, as evident in his reclamation of the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon for Hebrew wisdom literature, to which he wrote an extensive commentary titled *Ruah Hen*.[10] He also combined his passions for the Bible and for Hebrew poetry in his multi-volume epic poem about the life of Moses, *Shire Tiferet* (1789–1829).[11]

In the early 1780s, this linguistic and cultural revival also found expression in the eastern Prussian city of Königsberg, where a small group of Jews, led by Isaac Euchel (1756–1804), formed a "Society for the Promotion of the Hebrew Language" and published a Hebrew journal, *Ha-Me'assef*. Euchel, a native of Copenhagen who had spent his youth in Berlin, was one of the few Jews of his generation to receive his humanistic education in the institutional setting of the university, including attendance at the lectures of Immanuel Kant. Employed as a private tutor by the wealthy Friedländer family, Euchel and the small society of Hebraists received the backing of this family and appropriated the contemporary appetite for popular periodicals, launching *Ha-Me'assef* in 1783. This monthly presented a wide assortment of literature and journalism – current events, poetry, science, reviews, biography, ethics, and philosophy – with the aim of disseminating articles that were in every way as modern and sophisticated as that of other European publications. Both tone and content were commensurate with an enlightened penchant for education, expressing a full-throated desire to foster critical-mindedness and a broadening of cultural horizons. Many of the contributors to this journal echoed contemporary tropes, wherein they valorized reasoned discourse and eschewed obscurantism. They adopted a certain heroic posture as a group that sought to roll back centuries of darkness and usher in a new-found respect for humanistic and scientific endeavors, especially in communities and among classes that had not hitherto been exposed to them. However, while their rhetoric and substantive posture reflected central elements of eighteenth-century Enlightenment culture, the editors and contributors of this journal put forth a distinctly Jewish agenda, namely the stimulation of a *Jewish* engagement with European arts and sciences. *Ha-Me'assef*

[8] Ibid., 38a, 47b. See also his *Masekhet 'Avot 'im perush Yeyn Levanon* (Berlin, 1775) and his comments to III: 18.
[9] *Gan Na'ul*, 21a. [10] *Hokhmat Shelomoh* (Berlin, 1780).
[11] *Shire Tiferet* (Berlin, 1789–1802; Prague, 1829)

remained a thoroughly Jewish publication, assuming a traditional textual literacy, highlighting the linguistic and cultural sophistication of pre-modern Jewish scholarship, and never wavering from its stated aim of fostering a distinctly Hebraic renascence.[12]

In the last decades of the eighteenth century, socio-economic changes taking place across west-central and central European German lands further increased the value of a proper German education. While families of means attended to this by private instruction, their recognition of the broad opportunities of the moment and their sense of communal responsibility also prompted them to see to the German education of the lesser classes, as manifest in the founding of new *Freischulen* in Berlin (in 1778) and elsewhere. In Habsburg lands, the impetus came in the 1780s in the form of the *Toleranzpatent* and the new state policy that ordered Jews to enroll their children in local schools or in new Jewish communal schools that would provide a general education. Within a decade, dozens of Jewish *Normalschulen* were opened across central Europe. These schools were designed with thoroughly socio-economic considerations in mind, such that they often offered only an education in general subjects, essentially supplementing the traditional Jewish education received elsewhere. When, in other instances, the curriculum did include Jewish studies, this was often done for state regulatory purposes, wherein the schools were instructed to provide for "moral instruction"; in these cases, the new schools offered a broad, almost generically religious study of Judaism and Jewish texts. In either case, the schools served to provide a practical, utilitarian means of aiding the acculturation of the less well-off segments of Jewish society; even tradition-bound rural communities took the establishment of such schools as a natural adaptation to changing times.[13]

For Mendelssohn, Wessely, and many of the leading contributors to *Ha-Me'assef*, the immediate concern was not the absorption of German *per se*, for in urban centers in Prussia and other German states this process was already well under way.[14] Their concern, rather, was how to balance this rapid Germanicization of central European Jewish culture with their desire to reinvigorate the textual and intellectual traditions of rabbinic and medieval Judaism. The attempt at cultural synthesis and balance informed

[12] See the prospectus for this journal, published as *Naḥal ha-Besor* (Königsberg, 1783), esp. 12; and the letter of Isaac Euchel in *Ha-Me'assef* 2 (1785), 117. See also Euchel, *Sefat 'Emet* (Königsberg, 1782), 3.

[13] See Michael Silber, "The Historical Experience of German Jewry and its Impact on Haskalah and Reform in Hungary," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987), 107–15.

[14] See, e.g., Werner Weinberg, "A Word List for Teaching Eighteenth-Century Jews Some Fine Points of High German," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 29 (1984), 277–81.

Wessely's idealized response to Joseph II's *Toleranzpatent* as set out in his *Divrei Shalom ve-'Emet* (1782). Wessely's famously enthusiastic embrace of the new Habsburg measures took as its central pivot the distinction between universal and particular realms of knowledge – that is, between those realms shared by all humanity and those exclusive to Jews. Although Wessely's formulation clearly presented universal knowledge as chronologically and conceptually prior to traditional Jewish learning, he never wavered from the notion that *Jewish* education was to be thoroughly grounded in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic traditions. Wessely's fundamental assumption, in *Divrei Shalom ve-'Emet*, was the essentially inextricable relationship between Jewish and humanistic learning, and this point was amply reflected in his diagnosis of, and solution to, the linguistic failures of the moment. Wessely was as disturbed by Jews who had no real grasp of the Hebrew they uttered in their prayers as by the poor German employed by them on the streets; one was as culturally embarrassing as the other.[15] Along these lines, he impugned the use of Yiddish among German Jews because *leshon ashkenaz*, as he and others called it, was a "garbled and confused" German, and Jews had failed to adjust to the fact that "we live among nations who speak this language properly." Yiddish, in other words, was not viewed as a "foreign" language, but more like a broken native language, a substandard German patois that did not measure up to the refined heights of contemporary *Hochdeutsch*.[16]

Wessely's remedy for these linguistic failings was a call for thoroughgoing bilingualism. Cognizant of the Jewish lag in Germanicization in less urbanized parts of central Europe, he stressed the practical and cultural benefits that German literacy would bring in facilitating social and business interactions.[17] At the same time, he repeated his insistence that a mastery of Hebrew was imperative for a full understanding of the biblical and rabbinic heritage, without which Jewish traditions could never be appreciated. As such, Jews not only needed to master their texts and traditions in clear and articulate terms, but to present them lucidly in the language and cultural terms of their environment.[18] Like Mendelssohn and others, Wessely saw language as the linchpin to thought, and its mastery was directly tied to the cultivation of one's innermost being. "Speech," he

[15] Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Divrei Shalom ve-'Emet* (Berlin, 1782) unpaginated, section 3.
[16] Ibid., section 7. See also Judah Leib Minden, *Millim le-Eloah* (Berlin, 1760).
[17] *Divrei Shalom ve-'Emet*, esp. section 7. On Wessely and the importance of Hebrew for studying traditional texts, see E. Breuer, "Naphtali Herz Wessely and the Cultural Dislocations of an Eighteenth-Century Maskil," in S. Feiner and D. Sorkin, eds., *New Perspectives on the Haskalah* (London, 2001), 27–47.
[18] *Divrei Shalom ve-'Emet*, section 7.

wrote in language reminiscent of Mendelssohn's, "is the vehicle of thought and the means of its attainment, and it cannot properly serve as a vehicle without words purged of all error, and without refined expressions pleasing to the ear."[19] This linguistic imperative was universally applicable to any and all languages within one's cultural sphere, and thus the need for bilingual fluency was mirrored and embodied in the dual imperative for universal and Jewish knowledge. For Wessely, the mastery of both Hebrew and German was a principled and seamless response to new realities and opportunities.

The promotion of clarity and eloquence in both Hebrew and German was echoed through the 1780s and 1790s by other Jewish writers too, most notably Isaac Satanow (1732–1804) and Judah Leib ben Ze'ev (1764–1811). In the end, however, this ideal was never attained. While the acquisition of good German skills grew apace, the revival of Hebrew failed to take root. *Ha-Me'assef* appeared fairly consistently between 1783 and 1790, after which it stumbled along with four volumes over the next two decades. The group of individuals who contributed to *Ha-Me'assef* or published books that paralleled its central endeavors never amounted to more than a few dozen people; and given that even large Jewish communities like Prague, Frankfurt, and Hamburg had a very small number of regular subscribers, it appears that those active in this Hebraic revival were essentially writing for each other and a very limited circle of readers. The families that supported *Ha-Me'assef* and a new printing house dedicated to the publication of Hebrew books did so as a mere philanthropic act; their own cultural commitments were mirrored in the fact that they devoted far more attention to their children's advancement in German language and letters than in Hebrew. The revival of Hebrew was rendered marginal and irrelevant, and by the end of the century, many *maskilim* who supported this revival recognized that the real problem regarding Hebrew was not the poor quality of its instruction, but its outright abandonment.[20] The social and economic privileging of German had completely overwhelmed the nascent revitalization of Hebrew.

A NEW BIBLE AND ITS RELIGIOUS-CULTURAL MOMENT

The preoccupation with issues of language and education yields important insight into the cultural dynamics that informed this historical moment. Mendelssohn, Wessely, and many of the contributors to *Ha-Me'assef* saw

[19] Ibid. See also Judah Leib Ben Ze'ev, *Talmud Leshon 'Ivri* (Breslau, 1796), 2a–2b.

[20] See, e.g., the letter by Euchel, written in 1799, in Shalom ha-Cohen, *Ketav Yosher* (Vienna, 1820), 96; Ben Ze'ev, *'Otzar ha-Shorashim*, unpaginated preface [vi–vii]; and Shalom ha-Cohen in *Ha-Me'assef* 8 (1809), 37.

themselves as responding *qua* Jews to the intellectual renaissance that informed the European Enlightenments, movements that were notably self-assured and triumphalist. If their writings yielded a sense of inferiority, of somehow not measuring up to the attainments of the broader society in which they lived, there was no concession that such a lag was intrinsic and somehow reflective of an essential shortcoming in Jews and Judaism. They were quick, naturally, to cite medieval examples of Jewish cultural sophistication, or to point to Sephardic models of education in order to underscore this very point. But, at their core, these writings were not merely apologetic; rather, they expressed a certain cultural competitiveness, a sense that assumed the relevance and resilience of an ancient tradition which, now challenged once again, would respond with due purpose and vigor.

Alongside this cultural dynamic, however, lay a distinct and far more serious set of religious challenges. The German *Aufklärung*, it has often been noted, was far less hostile to religion and the religious establishment than French Enlightenment, and it is clear that many *Aufklärer* were deeply interested in questions of theology and seriously invested in forging a religious enlightenment. But while a positive engagement with religion was one thing, the religion of the Jews was quite another. The religious and intellectual environment in which Mendelssohn, Wessely, and the contributors to *Ha-Me'assef* wrote was hardly neutral with regard to Judaism. Even tolerant and progressive writers like Gotthold Lessing and Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, who supported Jewish civic equality and the integration of Jews into German society, did not espouse an unqualified acceptance of their religious practices. Dohm, for example, wrote condescendingly of Sabbath observance as full of "anxious and narrow regulations" that compelled Jews "to discern sin with every movement."[21] What distinguished Dohm from his more conservative Christian peers, who underscored the deeply embedded separatism of Jewish beliefs and practices, was the conviction that the "anxious spirit of ceremonies and pettinesses" would disappear "as soon as the Jews . . . [are] admitted as members of political society."[22] The point was that Judaism in its present form was simply incommensurate with the more refined and open spirit of contemporary – read: Christian – religiosity. An entry on the Jews in the new Enlightenment-minded *Deutsche Encyclopädie* put it succinctly when it wrote that "the yoke of his religious laws . . . are what prevent [the Jew] from becoming what he should and could be, and what he can never become as long as these

[21] Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (Berlin, 1781), 137.
[22] Ibid., 143–4.

restraints are not lifted, at least to some degree."[23] The problem, for good German Protestants, was less that of the Old Testament, which continued to be read in a Christological light even as it was interpreted along enlightened lines, than that of *rabbinic* Judaism. The Jewish Sages of old, in the words of the same encyclopedia, were "wanting in most of the [exegetical] devices that make a good exegete,"[24] which was only one way of saying that they failed to understand their own Scripture properly. Others too expressed similar judgments regarding post-biblical Judaism.[25]

It was against this backdrop that Mendelssohn and a small group of other like-minded scholars produced the most enduring religious text to emerge from the Haskalah: a new edition of the Pentateuch. Titled *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* and published between 1780 and 1783, this five-volume work included a fine German translation of the first five books of Scripture, a set of technical notes to the Masoretic text, and a deeply learned Hebrew commentary (*Be'ur*) penned in large part by Solomon Dubno, Wessely, and Mendelssohn himself. Mendelssohn and Dubno cast the need for a new translation in historical-cultural terms that affirmed the linguistic dynamics discussed above. They framed the issue within the centuries-old story of Jewish migrations, wherein Jews who absorbed foreign languages found themselves far more fluent and comfortable in those languages than in Hebrew, eventually depending on those vernaculars to understand their own Scripture. Elsewhere, Dubno described how this historical dynamic was replaying itself in contemporary terms: "In our generation, in which there was relief [from persecution], Jews pursued the study of languages, particularly the German tongue currently spoken by everyone, young and old alike. Most of the children and youth understand it in its purity, such that they take pride in its poetry and refined expressions."[26] In *'Alim Litrufah* (1778), the prospectus to the new Bible edition, Mendelssohn and Dubno stated plainly that German-Jewish society had again reached a point of cultural dis-equilibrium, with Hebrew proficiency once again lagging behind an ever more dominant vernacular.[27]

[23] *Deutsche Encyclopädie oder Allgemeines Real-Wörterbuch aller Künste und Wissenschaften von einer Gesellschaft Gelehrten*, 24 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1778–1807), XVIII [1794], 209.

[24] Ibid., II [1779], 491.

[25] See, e.g., Johann David Michaelis, *Mosaisches Recht*, 6 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1770–5), I, 44–5; Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (Berlin, 1780); and Anton Friedrich Büsching, *Geschichte der Jüdischen Religion* (Berlin, 1779), 181–6.

[26] This was articulated in Dubno's unpublished introduction to the new Bible, one section of which was printed in *Ha-Carmel* 3, 6 (1876), 306.

[27] See *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, XIV, 323–31, esp. 326–7.

The far-reaching aims of this work were set out in *'Alim Litrufah* and a lengthy general introduction printed with the completed Pentateuch.[28] First, given the historical-linguistic impetus for the translation, and echoing the widely shared nomenclature that termed both Yiddish and German as *leshon ashkenaz*, the new *hochdeutsch* translation offered in *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* was presented as a cultural act of updating an old, outdated "German" with one that was more sophisticated and *au courant*, and far more appropriate to the contemporary needs of German-speaking Jewry.[29] Second, the translation was also motivated by the fear that, as Prussian Jews became increasingly comfortable in German, they would seek *entrée* to the biblical text via extant German versions, be it Luther's sixteenth-century classic or the recent translation by Johann David Michaelis, the Göttingen professor and leading Protestant Bible scholar. Such Bibles were objectionable to Mendelssohn on account of their Christological interpretations, but he was further troubled by a new trend in European scholarship, one which was beginning to find particular resonance among German scholars: the text-critical study of the traditional Hebrew Bible, which sought to recover the "original" text by proposing a series of emendations. Mendelssohn emphatically rejected any approach that deviated from the traditional Masoretic text. The issue was not only that of textual authenticity and reliability, but a concern that critical emendations would directly undermine rabbinic interpretations of Scripture, which, formally if not exegetically, assumed the letter-perfect preservation of the traditional text. The Mendelssohnian German translation was thus an attempt to preserve Jewish textual and interpretive traditions.[30]

The third aim of *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* was to stimulate the study of the Hebrew Bible by reintroducing eighteenth-century Jews to the rich and sophisticated schools of medieval Jewish exegesis. On the one hand, Mendelssohn's translation offered a reading of Scripture fully attuned to the *peshat*, the textual and contextually informed form of exegesis. On the other hand, Mendelssohn had a profound appreciation for the way in which medieval exegetes grappled, in varying degrees and from different

[28] The three-part introduction was titled *'Or Lintivah*; it is reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, XVI.1, 21–55.

[29] Ibid., 39–40.

[30] Ibid., 39. Other expressions of such defensiveness were evident in the contributions of Euchel and Joel Löwe to *Ha-Me'assef* 1 (1784), 71–2, 93, and in the German supplements, *Erste Zugabe zu der Hebräischen Monatschrift dem Sammler* 1 (1784), 12–14; and *Zweite Zugabe zu der Hebräischen Monatschrift dem Sammler* (1784), 12–24; and *Erste Zugabe zu des Dritten Jahrganges* [to *Ha-Me'assef* 3] (1786), 39–53. See also Joel Löwe and Aaron Wolfssohn, *Jeremias Klagegesänge. Uebersetzt und mit Anmerkungen* (Berlin, 1790) iii–xxiv, esp. xiv–xx.

perspectives, with the relationship of *peshat* to the vast corpus of rabbinic *derash*, the term used to refer to the rabbinic interpretations of Scripture that appeared – certainly to the likes of the *Aufklärer* – to be at odds with a straightforward and reasonable reading of the biblical text. A decade earlier, Mendelssohn had published a commentary to Ecclesiastes in which he took up this very question. In that earlier work, he suggested that both levels of meaning sprouted organically from the text itself, and that both represented authentic, textually precise readings of the words of Scripture. Mendelssohn's presentation, however, was far less of an attempt to justify the straightforward or plain-sense interpretation of Scripture – a level of interpretation that he frankly took for granted – than a means of demonstrating how rabbinic *derash* was grounded upon an incisive appreciation of the multivalent nature of language.[31] Along these same lines, the *Be'ur* set out to demonstrate the textual basis upon which rabbinic interpretations were constructed, thereby affirming – contra the *Aufklärer* – the fundamental harmony between midrash (both halakhic and aggadic) and the words of Scripture. As such, this commentary contained a wealth of rabbinic material and regularly suggested, in clear philological, syntactical, or grammatical terms, just how the rabbinic readings were derived. Mendelssohn thus conceived of the *Be'ur* as both a means of reviving the textually rigorous study of Scripture and a means of upholding the primacy and authority of rabbinic exegesis.

Within the parameters of these stated aims, and very much in their spirit, Mendelssohn used his commentary to Exodus – the main section of the *Be'ur* which he penned alone – to highlight what might be described as a distinctly Jewish approach to universal issues, be they philosophical or literary. While explicating passages that related to the names of God in Exodus 3, for example, Mendelssohn pointed out the fundamental philosophical notions embedded in the unique biblical name "YHWH." Mendelssohn, who was keenly aware of the ever-present shortcomings of translations, adopted the term "der Ewige" or "das ewige Wesen" as the most proximate German term. Mendelssohn's commentary, moreover, made it abundantly clear that his discussion of the divine names was indebted to medieval philosophical and kabbalistic literature; whatever universalizing one might locate in this notion of God, he articulated his understanding as something thoroughly rooted in centuries of Jewish

[31] Moses Mendelssohn, *Sefer Megillat Kohelet* (Berlin, 1770), in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, XIV, 149–51; and *'Or Lintivah*, in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, XVI.1, 40–1. The same exegetical concern was earlier articulated in Wessely, *Gan Na'ul*, 3b, 10a; and later by Hayyim Coeslin, *Sefer Maslul* (Hamburg, 1788), unpaginated [13–14].

learning.[32] In a similar move, Mendelssohn also devoted attention to the literary aspects of the Bible, drawing upon the work of the English churchman and scholar Robert Lowth and focusing particularly on the use of parallelism in biblical poetry. Mendelssohn saw in this literary form a means of stressing clarity and meaning over sensual pleasure, which he viewed as the ultimate wedding of purpose and form. Here again he sought to draw Jews to a fuller appreciation of their own literary heritage, one that to his mind competed with and even surpassed the literary fashions of his own day.[33]

POLITICS AND RELIGION

As Mendelssohn's Bible project demonstrates, the ongoing processes of Jewish acculturation forced the brightest and most intellectually sensitive Jews to rethink aspects of Judaism in light of the new ideas and sensibilities being articulated around them. Beyond the new edition of the Pentateuch, these reflections concerned broad and even universal matters, such as the problem of theodicy or the place of esthetics in religious thought, and also more parochial issues, such as the Jewish view of non-Jews and the possibility of their salvation. Jews were thus compelled to think anew about their own texts and traditions, especially when so much *Aufklärung* rhetoric and thought, even the most overtly universalist, assumed Christian notions of faith and religiosity. These reflections were significantly politicized and infused with a sense of immediacy when, in 1781–2, government advisors and officials in Prussia and the Habsburg Empire simultaneously (but separately) raised the possibility of Jewish civic equality. The debate that ensued, it must be stressed, was not framed by Jews, but nonetheless directed at them; explicitly and implicitly, the questions concerned the character of Judaism and whether or not it was amenable to economic and social integration.

These issues came to the fore rather suddenly and dramatically in an exchange of essays which culminated in the writing of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* (1783), a relatively slim book that offered a deeply considered and profoundly traditional reflection on religion, toleration, and the nature of Judaism. A year earlier, Mendelssohn had publically applauded Dohm's *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (1781) for supporting the removal of many legal and economic restrictions against the Jews, but he explicitly and pointedly rejected Dohm's allowance for the ongoing use of the traditional *ḥerem* ("writ of excommunication") as a means of Jewish self-regulation. The issue, for Mendelssohn, was one of principle and

[32] *Be'ur* to Exodus 3:14–15. [33] *Be'ur* to Exodus 15:introduction.

consistency, and it appeared to be a striking example of how the internalization of the putatively European notion of toleration was seen to require a transformation of Judaism. If Jews wished to be included in civil society by asking that the religious beliefs of individuals or communities be placed beyond state control and its social and economic policies, then this principle also needed to be applied to the internal life of religious societies. Jews, in other words, could not wield the social and economic weapon of excommunication in the service of religious control without contravening the principle that religious beliefs should be freely held without social and economic consequences. Hence, Mendelssohn famously exclaimed that "true, divine religion does not arrogate to itself any power over opinions and propositions . . . it knows no power other than the power to convince by reasoning and to make one happy through convictions held. True divine religion . . . is all mind and heart."[34]

Soon afterwards there appeared a pamphlet whose anonymous author – now identified as a minor Protestant writer named August Friedrich Cranz – hailed Mendelssohn's enlightened view of religion, but seized upon the apparent incongruity of Mendelssohn's eschewal of religious coercion in the form of the *ḥerem* and his continued embrace of Judaism, with its myriad threats of punishment.[35] If Mendelssohn, the argument went, was willing to reject a key religious institution such as excommunication, then he would surely be willing to abandon or modify other aspects of Judaism, particularly those that kept Jews from participating fully in civic life. The pamphlet identified the offending "accretions" with the edifice of rabbinic Judaism, and informed Mendelssohn that the attainment of civic equality would be contingent upon the reform of Judaism, guided by the beacon of enlightened Protestantism. A postscript appended to this pamphlet posed an even more fundamental religious question: if Mendelssohn believed that true religion was "all mind and heart," in what sense did he still uphold a traditional belief in divine revelation?[36]

The response offered in Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* was to deny any contradiction between his enlightened and universalistic views of religion and his adherence to Judaism.[37] He defended the integrity of rabbinic

[34] See Mendelssohn's preface to *Manasseh Ben Israel, Rettung der Juden. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Nebst einer Vorrede von Moses Mendelssohn* (Berlin, 1782), in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, VIII, 16–25. The citation is on p. 18.

[35] *Das Forschen nach Licht und Recht* (Berlin, 1782), in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, VIII, 75–87.

[36] *Nachschrift*, in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, VIII, 91–2.

[37] *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (Berlin, 1783), in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, VIII, 99–204; citations will also refer to the English translation, *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. Allan Arkush (Hanover, NH, 1983).

Judaism, and made a rather carefully stated case for the superiority of Judaism over Christianity. The choice of title encapsulated Mendelssohn's calibrated defiance, for it responded to the pamphlet's invocation of John 4:21 and its vision of a day in which the divine spirit would be universally embraced and no longer limited to Jerusalem.[38] Recognizing the link between this form of universalism and the de-legitimation of religious parochialism, the choice of *Jerusalem* as the title for this work signaled Mendelssohn's desire to defend and uphold Jewish particularism.

Mendelssohn opened his book with a restatement of the political principles and ideas that would serve as the basis for a new political order. Drawing on the political-philosophical discourse of early modern Europe, he argued that state power was to be limited to its interest in regulating a circumscribed set of rights and social interactions. The thoughts and personal convictions of individuals, however, were subject to neither temporal powers nor any other body, including ecclesiastical institutions. Mendelssohn thus repeated his call for the civil admission of the Jews by insisting that, since the state lacked jurisdiction over beliefs, Jews should not be denied the privileges, duties and responsibilities conferred by citizenship.

Mendelssohn turned to the subject of Judaism in Part II of *Jerusalem*, rejecting the call to institute religious reforms and arguing that this religious tradition was fully consonant with the principles of the Enlightenment. In offering a new and far-reaching interpretation of Judaism, Mendelssohn held firmly to both the universal and natural underpinnings of all religious traditions, and the integrity and contemporary relevance of rabbinic Judaism. In order to advance his argument, Mendelssohn melded two sets of distinctions; the first was the distinction between thought (or belief) and action, including religious ritual, while the second distinction was that of nature and language. Mendelssohn affirmed that the author of the postscript had understood him correctly, namely that the fundamental truths of Judaism, and indeed of all faiths, were universally accessible through nature alone and therefore not in need of revelation. Only such truths, which concerned notions of God, His Providence, and the immortality of the soul, were essential to personal felicity and eternal salvation, and were thus intended to be universal and natural in every sense. They could be grasped both intellectually and intuitively, thereby were equally available to illiterates and to European sophisticates; and since they were available at all times and places, they would never be revealed via language and script, which were always temporally rooted.[39]

[38] *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, VIII, 81.
[39] Ibid., VIII, 157–64; Arkush translation, 90–6.

Mendelssohn, however, asserted that, as a Jew, he believed unqualifiedly in the particular historical revelation at Sinai, a revelation in time and space and limited to one people. This revelation was parochial in every sense of the term; it was parochial in its mode of delivery, transcribed in one people's language and script, and it was parochial in its law and ritual, designed to recall and shape the collective experiences of this particular nation. This revelation, however, contained no direct instruction regarding the eternal truths necessary for salvation; these, as we already indicated, were the true province of all humanity. The unique laws, rituals, and practices of the Torah were designed only to orient its adherents to the eternal truths of reason, to "remind us of them and to rouse us to ponder them" and to construct a life that placed the attainment of these truths as its exclusive goal.[40] For Mendelssohn, Judaism was designed around a full appreciation of both universal and particular aspects of religion, of the unfettered nature of the beliefs and ideas that constituted the former, and the unique way of contemplating those ideas not through mere words and images, but through the performance of prescribed acts – the *mitzvot*. Mendelssohn, of course, rejected the notion that Christianity had an exclusive grasp of eternal truths; no religion could claim such exclusivity, and hence Judaism could in no way be viewed as inferior. What distinguished one religion from the other was its means of orienting the individual and community toward those universal truths, and on this point, Mendelssohn faced an interesting dilemma. The argument that the particular means by which religions approached these universal truths were different but equal would not effectively deflect one of the central claims of the anonymous pamphlet, namely, that Jews had to adapt their religion to that of the European majority in order to facilitate integration. Since Christianity, no less than, Judaism, guided its adherents to the truths necessary for salvation, then on what basis could a Jew resist the pressure to join the religion of the majority?

Mendelssohn's response came in a carefully formulated critique of religions that relied too heavily on language and words: "Our alphabetical script makes man too speculative. It displays the symbolic knowledge of things and their relations too openly on the surface; it spares us the effort of penetrating and searching, and creates too wide a division between doctrine and life."[41] Judaism, unlike Protestant Christianity, avoided this problem, for its religiosity ultimately rested not on language, but on the myriad of performative *mitzvot*. These gestures and actions were connected to the mundane aspects of everyday life and demanded constant attention

[40] *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, VIII, 166; Arkush translation, 99.
[41] *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, VIII, 184; Arkush translation, 118.

and effort, and, not incidentally, collective learning and transmission. Drawing on the old Jewish predilection for oral tradition, Mendelssohn stressed the intrinsically social and mimetic nature of Jewish religious life, arguing that such religiosity was irreducible and hence not susceptible to reform. In Mendelssohn's hands, then, Judaism continued to be relevant and meaningful, never more so than in Enlightened Europe.

Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* was thus a seminal modern text that addressed the issue of universalism and particularism that would recur in so much of modern Jewish thought. Mendelssohn was also deeply concerned with other aspects of eighteenth-century universalism, particularly the notion that shared universal truths should somehow lead to a uniting of all religions. In the last pages of this book, Mendelssohn expressed his alarm at such thinking, warning that it could only come at the price of freedom of thought. True tolerance and enlightenment, he averred, could only be realized in unrestricted allowance of the most parochial of religions.

BETWEEN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY AND A NEW JUDAISM

While the eighteenth-century German Jews described above clearly absorbed and internalized aspects of German and European culture, they came to stress not only universal themes that bound Jews to European civilization, but also that which was unique and particular to Judaism. Their writings yielded an unmistakable protectiveness, part competitive desire to demonstrate the linguistic and intellectual vigor of Hebrew, part defensive attempt to deflect criticism of the textual patrimony of Judaism. This was not mere traditionalism; this was a keen sense, born of an intensifying commitment to a world of ideas often deeply hostile to Judaism, that these challenges needed immediate and meaningful response.

As with any other historical phenomenon, the individuals and writings discussed here need to be delineated not only by what they said, but by the way in which they defined, and were defined by, others. In this last regard, the Haskalah can be further understood from two different perspectives. On the one hand, the *maskilim* and their writings may be differentiated from the norms of the traditional society from which they emerged. While there was clearly tension between those who promoted this new cultural–intellectual renascence and some leading rabbinic figures, the nature and extent of this friction is not self-evident. To some degree, this was a conflict between the rabbinic establishment, seeking to uphold its own authority by maintaining existing cultural and educational patterns, and individuals – often private tutors or teachers who had little or no official–communal standing – who sought to change existing cultural and educational norms, thereby undermining the leadership of the communal rabbinate. The

conflict between these groups can also be cast in more substantive terms as those between a rabbinic elite committed to traditional Ashkenazic norms of behavior and thought, and a new intelligentsia who rather enthusiastically promoted new areas of knowledge and regarded traditional notions as outmoded and obscurantist.

It is telling that the sharpest delineation of a *Kulturkampf* between an older generation of irrational, backwards-looking traditionalists and an Enlightenment-minded younger generation of Jews emerged in the 1790s in the writings of the *maskilim* themselves. There are good reasons to be attentive to the context and nature of such portrayals, especially the fact that these sharp demarcations appeared in literary, mainly satirical writings, in which exaggeration and the propensity to overdraw and accentuate are intrinsic to the literary form itself.[42] The caricature of the narrow-minded traditionalist, moreover, was cast largely in terms of the German-Jewish image of eastern European Jews, and had little to do with rabbinic scholars who had been trained in the *yeshiva* in Fürth or studied regularly at the Berlin *bet ha-midrash* (*kloyz*). These maskilic satires, finally, were as intent on dismissing false or pseudo-Enlightenment as they were on ridiculing all forms of obscurantism.

In reality, the relationship between the *maskilim* and the traditionalist rabbinic leadership of the day was far more attenuated than these portrayals allowed. As we have seen, writers such as Mendelssohn, Wessely, and many of the contributors to *Ha-Me'assef* were no less concerned than their rabbinic peers to buttress traditional beliefs in the face of European free-thinking and religious skepticism that was threatening to spread among Jews.[43] This shared anxiety would appear to have evaporated when Mendelssohn's *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* and Wessely's *Divrei Shalom ve-'Emet* were denounced by some leading rabbinic figures as deviating from tradition. But by and large, this was not the case. The opposition to these writings remained a limited phenomenon, both in terms of the small number of leading rabbinic figures involved, and, more importantly, in

[42] Saul Berlin, *Ketav Yosher* (1794); Aaron Wolfssohn, "Sihah be-'Eretz he-Hayyim," *Ha-Me'assef* 7 (1794–7); Isaac Euchel, "R' Henekh, oder Vos Tut Me Damit," *Archiv far der Geshikhte fun Yidishn Teater un Drame* 1 (1930), 94–146.

[43] See Wessely, *Gan Na'ul*, 48b; Wessely, Preface to Moses Mendelssohn, *Phe'ed'an: hu' sefer Hasharat ha-Nefesh* (Berlin, 1787), [v–vi]; [Euchel], *Ha-Me'assef* 1 (1784), 26–7; and Ze'ev Wolf ben Abraham of Dessau, "Letters," *Ha-Me'assef* 1 (1784), 167–74. Compare these with the concerns articulated in rabbinic sermons of the 1770s and early 1780s; see R. Ezekiel Landau, *Derushei ha-Tselah* (Jerusalem, 1966), no. 14, p. 24b, and no. 39, p. 53b; and R. Eleazar Fleckeles, *'Olat Hodesh* (Prague, 1785), 8b–9a, 13b–14a, 18b. See also the homilies of R. Eleazar Löw, appended to his *Sha'arei Ḥokhmah* (Prague, 1807), 74b and 76a.

the fact that the heated rhetoric of opposition receded quickly and virtually disappeared. In the years that followed, the writings of Wessely and Mendelssohn were widely appreciated and were duly engaged and appropriated by traditional rabbis and scholars.[44] These scholars, to be sure, remained deeply worried about changing social and religious patterns of practice and belief, namely the loosening and abandonment of traditional practices and beliefs, but these concerns were also evident in the writings of some *maskilim* themselves, who again expressed deep anxiety regarding Jews who eschewed traditional Judaism in the name of Enlightenment.[45] The point here is that, while the writings of this new intelligentsia represented a clear re-prioritization of Jewish learning that yielded tension and conflict with the rabbinic establishment, the relationship between *maskilim* and traditionalists is best understood in terms of overlapping and divergent commitments.

The writings of the *maskilim* should also be delineated and historically framed from an entirely different perspective, namely, by those German Jews who gave up on the Hebraic revival and rejected traditional Judaism. The most important figure in this group, in terms of communal and social visibility, was David Friedländer (1750–1834), a member by birth and marriage of the wealthiest Prussian Jewish families and until the 1780s a strong and even crucial supporter of the cultural endeavors discussed above. Beginning in the late 1780s, however, Friedländer devoted himself to improving the legal and civic status of Prussian Jews, or, at a minimum, the suspension of discriminatory fiscal and regulatory laws for the wealthiest and most integrated Jews, i.e. the leading families of Berlin. As a leading official of the Jewish community, Friedländer remained broadly committed to the welfare of his fellow Jews, but he came to publicly eschew the traditional canons and practices of biblical and rabbinic Judaism in favor of its underlying moral and rational core. He regarded the pedagogic and cultural endeavors of Wessely and the contributors to *Ha-Me'assef* as a means of loosening the hold of traditional teachings and the authority of their rabbinic expositors – but not, in any meaningful sense, as an end in and of themselves. By the end of the century, Friedländer had clearly set his sights on a rather elemental notion of natural religion, thoroughly

[44] See, e.g., Abraham Trebitsch, *Korot ha-'Ittim* (Brünn, 1801), 27b–30a; Eleazar Fleckles, *Melekhet ha-Kodesh* (Prague, 1812); David Friesenhausen, *Mosdot Tevel* (Vienna, 1820), 84a; Samuel Landau, *'Ahavat Tzion* (Prague, 1827), 27a–27b [sermon from 1816]. See also Moseh Samet, "M. Mendelson, N. H. Veizel, ve-Rabbanei Doram," *Mehkarim be-Toldot 'Am Yisra'el ve-'Eretz Yisra'el* 1 (1970), 233–57.

[45] See Wessely's approbation of the maskilic edition of Saadya Gaon, *Sefer ha-'Emunot ve-ha-De'ot* (Berlin, 1789), unpaginated [i]; Nahman Berlin, *'Ein Mishpat* (Berlin, 1796), 2–4; Ben Ze'ev, *'Otzar ha-Shorashim*, unpaginated [vii].

Enlightened and universalist in all its teachings. What the *maskilim* had wrought was far too parochial and limiting for him; while the likes of Mendelssohn and Wessely struggled to simultaneously absorb and withstand aspects of the Christian Enlightenments of eighteenth-century Europe, he envisioned a progressive religiosity that ultimately superseded Judaism and Christianity.[46]

The same movement away from the intellectual, cultural, and religious commitments of the *maskilim* discussed above is also evident in the writings of a small group of Jewish intellectuals, among them Solomon Maimon (1753–1800), Lazarus Bendavid (1762–1832), and Saul Ascher (1767–1822). Maimon – poor, rootless, eccentric, and abrasive – was very much the antithesis of the patrician Friedländer, but he was the most philosophically sophisticated thinker of this group. Although he had briefly consented to contribute to the production of Hebrew textbooks and translations, Maimon had neither the commitment nor interest in this cultural project and it was quickly abandoned. Maimon was a sharply critical reader of philosophical literature from Maimonides through Leibniz and Wolff and down to Kant, and his own philosophical thinking was vested on a strict and pure rationalism that was as little satisfied with the new Kantian notions as with the philosophical positions articulated by Mendelssohn. By the last decade of his brief life, it was evident that Maimon had not the slightest interest in the maskilic program, not to mention Jewish texts and traditions; he had cast his lot with an idealized and purified notion of Enlightenment that left nothing meaningful to Judaism.[47]

In more positive and substantive terms, Ascher and Bendavid undertook a fundamental reconceptualization of religion and religiosity based on contemporary notions of autonomous ethics, rationality, and universalism. Simultaneously internalizing and resisting aspects of Kantian philosophy, Ascher's *Leviathan* (1792) sought to articulate the "inner spirit" and essence of Judaism, arguing that this essence properly understood was fully commensurate with the autonomous morality that was to serve as the basis of a modern universalized religiosity.[48] In more strident terms, Bendavid lashed out against the centuries-old Jewish preoccupation with external forms – its rituals and laws – which had perverted the true "doctrine of

[46] David Friedländer, *Sendschreiben an Seine Hochwürden, Herrn Oberconsistorialrath und Probst Teller zu Berlin, von einigen Hausvätern jüdischer Religion*, 2nd edn. (Berlin, 1799), 60–1, 83–6.

[47] Solomon Maimon, *Lebensgeschichte*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1792–3), II, 215–31.

[48] Saul Ascher, *Leviathan oder Ueber Religion in Rücksicht des Judenthums* (Berlin, 1792), 8–9, 149ff., 226ff.

Moses," and underscored the need for Jews to reconstitute themselves as morally autonomous individuals who would thus effect a purification of historical Judaism.[49] Although these writers differed in many aspects of their thinking, they shared a deeply critical view of rabbinic and medieval Judaism, painting them as an extended historical aberration that only a full-throated embrace of modern religiosity would redeem. This was, of course, a profound and profoundly important turn in how Jews came to conceive of Judaism and of its continued relevance in the newly emerging societies. But, by any measure, the cultural, intellectual, and religious presuppositions of these writers shared very little with those *maskilim* who insisted on charting the revival of Jewish culture by the cultural traditions of pre-modern Judaism.

CONCLUSION

The proper understanding of the Haskalah and its relationship to the European Enlightenments is very much dependent on the way in which this historical phenomenon is contextualized. In light of the socio-economic and cultural–intellectual developments of early modern Europe discussed elsewhere in this volume, it is clear that European Jewry had been undergoing significant change well before the advent of the Haskalah in the 1770s and 1780s. To identify the Haskalah broadly with what is routinely depicted as the "beginnings of modernization" – integration, acculturation, and accommodation – is correct as far as it goes, but it fails to differentiate the Haskalah sufficiently in a historically meaningful way, in terms of both European and European-Jewish developments that preceded it and those that provided its immediate context and stimuli. Viewed in its particular geographical-cultural terms, the Haskalah is a remarkably circumscribed movement, shaped by the particular cultural dynamics of northern German-speaking Europe and limited to two overlapping generations. On one level, it clearly represented a determined affirmation of the ideals and values commonly associated with the Enlightenment in general, and the *Aufklärung* in particular. At the same time, however, the Haskalah must be differentiated by a set of underlying concerns that were made manifest in two salient features: the desire to launch a revival of Hebrew and Hebrew letters, and a determined attempt to defend Judaism and its classical texts in the face of widespread hostility. These two aims, to be sure, were not necessarily commensurate, but in the hands of the leading *maskilim* who produced the most influential and

[49] Lazarus Bendavid, *Etwas zur Charackteristick der Juden* (Leipzig, 1793), 45, 65.

sophisticated works, the two aims were conjoined in their deep-seated commitment to the revitalization of pre-modern traditions of study and scholarship. The German Jewish writings at the center of the Haskalah, in other words, certainly promoted the ongoing processes of acculturation and integration, but this happened precisely as the *maskilim* were struggling to ensure some meaningful cultural continuity. It was precisely this binary set of commitments, with its simultaneous outward- and inward-looking focus, that serves as the hallmark of the Haskalah, distinguishing it from the other Jewish cultures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This very same set of commitments also stood in contrast to those Jewish thinkers of the 1790s who effectively rejected what they perceived as the parochial, inconsistent, and untenable ideals of this movement in favor of a more substantive and consistent internalization of the Enlightenment.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the confluence of challenges and opportunities that gave rise to the Haskalah continued to intensify and accelerate, and the coherence and cultural integrity of the movement quickly dissipated. The socio-economic opportunities that presented themselves to the German-speaking lands of central Europe placed a broad premium on Germanicization and acculturation, and the Hebraic and textual interests of the *maskilim* remained the province of some scattered and increasingly marginal individuals. The enrollment of a small number of Jews in the newly founded university in Berlin gave rise to a new set of intellectual engagements, and the immediate absorption of the ideals and methods of *Wissenschaft* pointed the study of Hebraica in a profoundly different direction. The 1810s also gave rise to new liturgical models of Jewish worship, and although this development remained largely aesthetic and conceptually inchoate, it was already clear – as, for example, in a treatise written by Friedländer in 1812[50] – that the rapid Germanicization of German Jewry and the need for a broad and open-ended reconsideration of religious principles and practices would render the maskilic agenda largely irrelevant. On the other hand, the fresh and sophisticated study of biblical and rabbinic texts promoted by Mendelssohn and Wessely in defense of traditional Judaism was taken up by *maskilim* in parts of the Habsburg Empire, such as northern Italy, Bohemia, and Galicia. These same writings also continued to be studied and utilized by members of the rabbinic elite who, beset by what they perceived to be the deleterious effects of assimilation, sought new means to buttress traditional Judaism.

[50] David Friedländer, *Ueber die, durch die neue Organisation der Judenschaften in den Preussischen Staaten* (Berlin, 1812).

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CHAPTER 25

WOMEN, WATER, AND WINE
The Paradoxical Piety of Early Modern Jewry

ELLIOTT HOROWITZ

ACCEPTABLE ABERRATIONS

Late in the 1480s, R. Obadiah of Bertinoro, a native of Umbria, wrote to his father from Jerusalem describing some of the Jewish communities through which he had passed on his way to the Holy Land. Particular attention was paid to the Jews of Palermo, whose practices he found quite different from those of northern Italy. R. Obadiah found them "very lax" in matters of menstrual purity, adding that "most brides enter the marriage canopy already pregnant." By contrast, he found them "extremely zealous and meticulous in observing the prohibition regarding wine of the gentiles." The juxtaposition of these observations seems to have been intended less to praise Palermitan Jews for their stringency in one area or to find fault with their laxity in another than to highlight, for the benefit of his father, the sharp differences between two Jewish religious cultures.[1] In central and northern Italy, as we shall see, the rabbinic prohibition regarding "wine of the gentiles" (*setam yenam*) was treated with considerable laxity, whereas married Jewish women performed their monthly ablutions (sometimes in local rivers) with great dedication. Moreover, while Jewish young men occasionally engaged in pre-marital sexual activity, their partners were more often Christian prostitutes than their future Jewish wives.

This chapter will use R. Obadiah's comments as both a starting point and a frame for discussing the complicated relationship between religious praxis and the realities of social life among the Jews of Europe and the eastern Mediterranean during the early modern period. Obadiah himself, as someone who was born in Europe and migrated to Palestine, was aware of the sometimes deep differences between northern and southern communities on the continent, and of the sometimes deeper ones between Jews

[1] See Elliott Horowitz, "Toward a Social History of Jewish Popular Religion: Obadiah of Bertinoro on the Jews of Palermo," *Journal of Religious History* 17 (1992), 138–51.

in the Christian world and those living under the rule of Islam. Although historians in recent decades have tended to segregate their experiences, one of the challenges this chapter will take upon itself is to integrate the religious worlds of European and Mediterranean Jewry, both of which – for example – came under the sway of kabbalistic practice during the sixteenth century and were engulfed by Sabbatean messianic excitement during the seventeenth.

Yet those kabbalistic practices themselves faced different sorts of challenges on different continents. It was one thing to grow one's beard untrimmed, following the Zohar's recommendation, in a Muslim country where it was revered as a sign of manhood, and quite another to do so in Baroque Europe, where the well-trimmed Van Dyke graced even rabbinical countenances. And it was one thing to recite midnight kabbalistic prayers regularly with the aid of coffee, as could be done from the sixteenth century throughout the Middle East, and quite another to attempt to do so in Europe before the gradual arrival there, during the following century, of that same black beverage.[2] Similarly, as we shall see in this chapter, abstaining from "gentile wine" in Muslim countries where alcoholic drinks were shunned by the local populace, or in northern Europe where beer was both cheap and plentiful, was far less challenging than doing so in more southern regions where beer was generally scarce and wine the most popular drink.[3]

Prior to the Enlightenment, it is difficult to contrast the degree of religious observance in different Jewish communities, and certainly anachronistic to speak of Jews who displayed "assimilative tendencies" or had "little respect for religion."[4] Nor does it make sense to speak of "the secularized or nonreligious ways" of Polish Jews in the sixteenth century, or of the "freethinking" allegedly behind "the permissive behavior" of German-speaking Jews in the early eighteenth.[5] Shmuel Feiner, who has argued for the emergence of "an individualistic hedonistic ethos" among

[2] See Horowitz, "The Early Eighteenth Century Confronts the Beard: Kabbalah and Jewish Self-Fashioning," *Jewish History* 8 (1994), 95–115; "Coffee, Coffeehouses, and Nocturnal Rituals of Early Modern Jewry," *AJS Review* (1989), 17–46.

[3] On the contrast between northern and southern Europe, see F. P. Braudel and Frank Spooner, "Prices in Europe from 1450 to 1750," in E. E. Rich and C. H. Wilson, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe,* vol. IV: *The Economy of Expanding Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1967), 408–10; Tim Unwin, *Wine and the Vine: An Historical Geography of Viticulture and the Wine Trade* (London, 1991), 176–7, 235–6.

[4] Contrast I. Epstein, *The Responsa of Rabbi Simon b. Zemah Duran as a Source of the History of the Jews in North Africa* (Oxford, 1930), 58; Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, trans. L. Schoffman, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1961–5), II, 74.

[5] B. D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia, 1982), 89; Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, trans. C. Naor (Philadelphia, 2011), xi, 25.

early eighteenth-century European Jews, cites, for example, R. Jacob Reischer's alleged shock at "the confession of a woman who had failed to restrain her sexual urge, had betrayed her husband, and had given birth to a daughter by her lover." But he fails to mention that the woman's husband, as we learn from the same responsum, had been incarcerated abroad for some years, during which time she had been seduced by one man and briefly became the mistress of another. Such behavior hardly reflects a new "hedonistic ethos," and is hardly unknown among European Jewry prior to the eighteenth century.[6]

Most importantly, the woman's confession had been offered willingly out of (what Reischer saw as) true contrition and an earnest desire to repent, albeit in the (false) hope of being able to return to her husband, who was a *kohen* (member of the hereditary priestly tribe). Recognizing her sincerity, the rabbi prescribed an elaborate list of penitential rituals, to be observed over sixty-five days. As Jacob Katz observed concerning early modern Ashkenazic society, "even the promiscuous shared in the battle against perversion – their own and that of others." Katz noted the "frequent requests in the responsa literature for methods to atone for sexual sins, sins varying from the 'spilling of seed in vain' [harshly condemned by the Zohar] to adultery with a married woman." One such request was sent to R. Meir of Lublin (d. 1616), who served as rabbi in Krakow and then Lemberg/Lvov. The adulterer, described as a "learned man" who had succumbed while drunk (although it is not clear whether his partner in sin had been equally inebriated), was instructed by R. Meir to confess publicly in all three aforementioned communities and in each case to undergo forty lashes.[7]

Even late in the eighteenth century, we encounter, in the responsa of the Prague rabbi Ezekiel Landau (d. 1793), cases of sexual sin that came to light due to the desire to seek repentance. One responsum, evidently sent to northern Italy, dealt with the case of several men who decided, during the penitential season prior to Rosh ha-Shana, to confess their (individual) dalliances with the same well-connected married woman – who was apparently something of a nymphomaniac. Another, sent to Alsace, addressed the case of a married woman who, fearing that her illness was terminal, confessed to her husband that she had had sexual relations several

[6] Feiner, *Origins of Jewish Secularization*, 57; Jacob Reischer, *Responsa Shevut Ya'akov* (Halle, 1710), pt. 3, no. 128. For a married woman giving birth out of wedlock in a fifteenth-century Ashkenazic community, see *Responsa of Jacob Weil* [Hebrew], ed. Y. Domb (Jerusalem, 2001), no. 12.

[7] Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages,* trans. B. D. Cooperman (New York, 1993), 123; Meir of Lublin, *Responsa* (Venice, 1618), no. 45.

times with a young man. After recuperating, the woman walked some two hours – with her husband – to a local rabbi in order to confess and seek penitential advice. Her request was forwarded by the Alsatian rabbi to Landau, who in 1770 had dealt with the rather astonishing case of a scholar who had sinned for three years with a married woman while residing in her home – evidently as a private teacher – and then married her daughter. In addition to wondering whether he was required to inform his father-in-law (who technically was forbidden to have sexual relations with his adulterous wife), the scholar sought penitential advice from the Prague rabbi – whose reply, stressing internal rather than external penance, was quite different from that of R. Meir of Lublin nearly two centuries earlier.[8] Regardless of that difference, however, neither transgressor seems to have been led into sin by a "hedonistic ethos."

Similarly, Arthur Hertzberg observed that, although in Metz "there were indeed numerous cases of bastardy in the second half of the [eighteenth] century . . . it would be wrong to deduce from this that moral conduct had, indeed, become markedly looser." That community's 1769 statutes sought to limit intermingling of the sexes – even designating separate days for cemetery visitations – but these too should not be seen as evidence that moral standards had become looser. Rather, aberrant behavior that had once been tacitly tolerated no longer fitted into the neat categories imposed by modernity. Those statutes also addressed relations between Jewish maidservants and their Jewish masters – from which such some of those cases of bastardy undoubtedly emerged. As Jay Berkovitz has noted, the Metz statutes clearly favored the masters and their families. Thus, when the established "norms of sexual impropriety" were violated, only the maidservant would be punished, being denied the right to remain overnight in the community. If she became pregnant as a result of a liaison with a married man, both would be removed from the community for fifteen years, but only she would be publicly shamed.[9]

Sexual contact between masters and young women employed in their homes is well documented among the Jews of both medieval Spain and Renaissance Italy, but in neither case were the communal punishments particularly severe. The employer was expected to help marry off his former maidservant, and to acknowledge paternity – his own or his son's – in cases

[8] Ezekiel Landau, *Responsa*, 2 vols. (1861), I, Oraḥ Ḥayyim no. 35, Even ha-Ezer, no. 71; II, Yoreh De'ah no. 12.

[9] Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York, 1968), 211–12; Jay Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650–1860* (Philadelphia, 2004), 50–1.

of pregnancy.[10] The stricter measures of the late eighteenth century would seem to reflect a fear of incipient secularization rather than serving as evidence for it. The rabbis and communities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had no such fears, and could thus be more tolerant of transgressions stemming from weakness of the flesh.

R. Meir Katzenellenbogen (d. 1565) of Padua was consulted by the rabbis of nearby Venice concerning a certain Moses Ovadiah, who had fathered a child with his maidservant Mira. This in itself was not particularly problematic, but Moses then betrothed her to one of his Jewish employees – who was promptly sent off on a two-month business trip. Eight months after the latter's return and seven months after their actual marriage she gave birth to a son, whom Katzenellenbogen was willing to declare legitimate – that is, not a *mamzer* according to Jewish law – although witnesses had seen Moses and Mira in bed together some nine months before his birth. The Paduan rabbi argued that the latter's well-known relationship with her employer before her betrothal did not brand her as the sort of loose woman who would sleep with someone other than her fiancé.[11] Whether or not he was correct in this particular instance, it is clear that Katzenellenbogen believed that common forms of deviation from Jewish law did not necessarily point to wholesale libertinage. They were rather what the twentieth-century historian Eduardo Grendi has felicitously described as "normal exceptions."[12]

R. Moses Isserles (1572), Katzenellenbogen's Krakovian colleague and relative, felt similarly about the Jews of Moravia among whom, one of his correspondents claimed, the practice had become widespread "not to abstain from drinking wine of the gentiles, with none protesting." R. Moses feared that if he roundly condemned their aberrant practice, those who occasionally drank non-Jewish wine would be regarded as having committed a cardinal sin. But he was also loath to be too forgiving, for fear that "sinners might find justification for their actions, and behave with even greater laxity" – that is, drink non-Jewish wine even when kosher

[10] Elliott Horowitz, "The Worlds of Jewish Youth in Europe, 1300–1800," in G. Levi and J.-C. Schmitt, eds., *A History of Young People*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1997), I, 110ff.; Horowitz, "Between Masters and Maidservants in the Jewish Society of Europe in Late Medieval and Early Modern Times," in I. Bartal and I. Gafni, eds., *Sexuality and the Family in History* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1998), 193–211; Horowitz, "Families and their Fortunes: The Jews of Early Modern Italy," in D. Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York, 2002), 596–7.

[11] *Responsa of R. Judah Minz and R. Meir Katzenellenbogen* [Hebrew] (Krakow, 1882), pt. II, no. 19; Horowitz, "The Worlds of Jewish Youth," 112–13.

[12] On Grendi's work, see Edward Muir, "Introduction: Observing Trifles," in Muir and G. Ruggiero, eds., *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore, 1991), xiv.

wine (or beer) was available. The great Polish rabbi decided, as a compromise, to provide "something of a justification," for those who drank non-Jewish wine, suggesting that "the Jews of Moravia and other such communities" where "there was nothing to drink except wine" might fall under the category of those who had received an ancestral tradition, albeit erroneous, to treat this prohibition lightly.[13]

Aberrations were more respectable, then, when they either had a pedigree or might be assumed to have one. And, indeed, the sort of relationship that Moses Ovadiah had with his maidservant – before her betrothal – was one that, as Rabbi Katzenellenbogen presumably knew, had a long history among Mediterranean Jews. His older contemporary, the Iberian-born Samuel Abravanel, had also fathered a bastard – either before or after his endogamous marriage to his cousin Benvenida – through a Jewish "concubine," who had probably been a household servant.[14] In fact, Samuel even named that child after his distinguished father Don Isaac, who was buried in Padua. During the inheritance dispute between the younger Isaac and his half-brothers – as well as their mother – that followed Samuel's death in 1547, Katzenellenbogen sided with the former, whom he addressed in a letter of support as "my beloved, the exalted Don Isaac Abravanel, son of the distinguished Don Samuel."[15] There seems to have been little embarrassment about the fact that the former was merely a "natural" son of the latter – which was the central issue of the inheritance dispute.

Jacob Abravanel, the elder of Don Isaac's (legitimate) half-brothers, who was active with his mother as a banker in Tuscany, did not, as far as we know, impregnate a Jewish maidservant, but he had been accused of the far more dangerous vice of having frequent carnal relations with Christian women – for which he fortunately managed to gain absolution in Rome in the very year of his father's death.[16] Although the absolution was somewhat unusual – and possibly related to Jacob and Benvenida's close ties with Duke Cosimo Medici and his wife Leonora – the crimes of which he was accused were not, especially among young members of Italian-Jewish banking families. Such men, who often maintained branches of their family banks in relatively remote locations, were subjected to temptations during their travels that were less endemic to Jewish life in the larger communities.

[13] *Responsa of Moses Isserles*, ed. A. Siev (Jerusalem, 1970), no. 124; H. H. Ben-Sasson, *Hagut ve-Hanhaga* (Jerusalem, 1959), 22–3.

[14] On the case of Samuel, as well as some Spanish precedents, see Horowitz, "The Worlds of Jewish Youth," 110–11; Horowitz, "Between Masters and Maidservants," 196–8.

[15] Horowitz, ""Between Masters and Maidservants," 198–9.

[16] S. Simonsohn, ed., *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, 8 vols. (1988–91), 2604–5 (doc. 2716).

Moses Shulvass, who saw Samuel Abravanel's fathering of a bastard as "a striking example of the 'licentiousness' of Renaissance Italian Jewry" (he was not familiar with the evidence concerning Samuel's son Jacob) also claimed that "the social rapprochement between Jews and Christians . . . brought about a loosening of religious observance."[17] This has recently been slightly modified by another scholar who refers rather to " a gradual loosening of religious observance,"[18] but both views are wide of the historical truth. Already in fifteenth-century Italy we may find instances of young Jewish men who evidently enjoyed carnal pleasures with Christian prostitutes, but these instances are hardly evidence of a "loosening of religious observance." Nor should they be seen as evidence that, as another scholar has claimed, "the sexual apprenticeship of the young Jew did not differ much from that of his Christian contemporary."[19] Rather, they should be seen as normal aberrations on the part of otherwise observant Jews, whose sexual escapades often resulted from the occupational challenges of managing (or being apprenticed at) remote branches of their family businesses.

WOMEN AND WATER

In 1464, several Jewish men were arrested for having sexual relations with a Christian woman at an inn outside Parma. Among these were Leone and Jacob, both of Casalmaggiore in Lombardy. The authorities in Parma (which was then, like Casalmaggiore, under the rule of Milan) asked Duke Francesco Sforza to instruct the constabulary of Casalmaggiore to arrest both men and either punish them locally or have them sent back to Parma for punishment there. Two Jews named Leone and Jacob were indeed arrested, but the latter claimed that he had been confused with another Jacob, who had meanwhile escaped to Reggio, which lay outside of the ducal jurisdiction.[20]

[17] M. A. Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. E. I. Kose (Leiden, 1973 [1955]), 164, 209. For a critique of Shulvass, see Robert Bonfil, "The Historian's Perception of the Jews in the Italian Renaissance: Toward a Reappraisal," *Revue des études Juives* 143 (1984), 59–82.

[18] W. J. vam Bekkum, "Jewish Intellectual Culture in Renaissance Context," in S. Gersh and B. Roest, eds., *Medieval and Renaissance Humanism: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reform* (Leiden, 2003), 240.

[19] Ariel Toaff, *Love, Work, and Death: Jewish Life in Medieval Umbria*, trans. J. Landry (London, 1996 [1989]), 12–13.

[20] Shlomo Simonsohn, ed., *The Jews in the Duchy of Milan*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1982–6), no. 849.

Both the fugitive Jacob and his accomplice Leone, who confessed to carnal relations with a Christian woman, evidently managed remote branches of their respective families' banks, and had stopped at the roadside inn while traveling between Casalmaggiore and Reggio. One thing they certainly shared (beyond the woman herself) was that neither was punished for the risky pleasures they had pursued there. Leone was pardoned by Duke Francesco in August of 1464, and Jacob received his pardon some six months later.[21] Despite the familial wealth that allowed both Jewish men to receive pardons from the duke, their families felt no need to construct a ritual bath to serve the small community of Casalmaggiore, whose women presumably made use of the Po – Italy's longest river.

The Po, however, was not good enough for R. Azriel Diena, who early in the sixteenth century addressed an angry missive to his coreligionists in Casalmaggiore, who permitted their wives, he claimed, to immerse themselves "in a public place open to all, and when they go there . . . they are followed by the nations of the land . . . and all who see them . . . observe their nakedness."[22] Diena, who had grown up in Italy's Piedmont region, was evidently then residing in Viadana (in the Po valley), where he lived between 1518 and 1526.[23] During the early 1520s, we find him advising Casalmaggiore's Jews concerning some of the technical details of *mikveh* (Jewish ritual bath) construction.[24]

Diena had earlier informed those same Jews, in his highly rhetorical style, that he had "heard" that their wives "go to immerse themselves in a place of mire and dirt (Isaiah 57:20), well known to all the nations (Esther 3:14)." His letter found two faults with the practice of ritual immersion. The first was technical – the Po's waters, through which boats traveled, were not necessarily clean, and any dirt that clung to the women's bodies would render their immersion invalid. Moreover, before immersing themselves, the women of Casalmaggiore, due to their discomfort in the presence of those non-Jews who came to watch, might not devote sufficient care to cleaning their bodies.

Diena was also concerned with the preservation of female modesty. Drawing upon an obscure passage in the tractate of *Sukkah* (49b), Diena argued that the prophet Micah's exhortation "to walk modestly with your God" (6:8) made it abundantly clear that "when women go to immerse themselves, they should do so discreetly and modestly, without being seen or heard." How then "can you do 'this most wicked thing' (Gen. 39:9)," he

[21] Ibid., nos. 199, 243, 453, 868, 893, 896.
[22] Azriel Diena, *Responsa*, ed. Y. Boksenboim, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv, 1977–9), I, no. 149.
[23] See Boksenboim's introduction, ibid., I, 20. [24] Ibid., I, nos. 191–2, 195.

asked the Jewish men of Casalmaggiore, "and permit your wives to engage in such lasciviousness, for their going to dip in the water will be publicly known, and all who see them will observe them wallowing in their immersion, while they are 'naked and bare' (Ezekiel 16:6–7)."[25] Diena then concluded on a practical note, suggesting that they might consider digging out a hole suitable for a *mikveh* beneath the homes of two of Casalmaggiore's Jewish residents, one of whom was David Norzi (written as Norsa in Latin letters).[26]

The latter was evidently the Mantuan banker and physician David ben Mordecai Norsa (d. 1528), who was listed in 1522 among the Jews permitted to operate loan-banks in the duchy of Milan.[27] David and his wife – whom Diena addressed in 1531 as "the honorable widow of the late David Norzi, the most noble of physicians" – were clearly people of considerable piety. After the death of their only son, David vowed to emigrate to Jerusalem if his wife agreed to join him, which she did. Shortly thereafter, David died, but his widow remained adamant about fulfilling their joint vow, despite various aches and pains (including a cat bite) that had interfered.[28] When, a decade earlier, Diena had suggested the Norsa home as one under which to construct a proper *mikveh*, he seems to have already known something about the couple's piety. He also presumably knew that they had come from Mantua, a large community near a small river (the Mincio) in which the Jewish women – unlike those of Casalmaggiore (a small community abutting a large river) – were not in the habit of performing their monthly ablutions.

Casalmaggiore's Jewish women, prior to the construction of their community's ritual bath, had been following a custom then common in other parts of the Mediterranean region, where rivers were warmer than in northern Europe. From a responsum by R. Benjamin Ze'ev ben Mattathias it is evident that one of the communities in his native Greece – most likely Arta (where he resided after returning from Italy in 1538) – built its first *mikveh* only during the second or third decade of the sixteenth century. Before then, as we learn from R. Benjamin Ze'ev, it had been customary for the local married women to perform their monthly ablutions in the adjacent Arachtos river and its tributaries. And even afterwards, as we also learn from his responsum, some women preferred to purify themselves "in the same manner as their mothers and grandmothers had."[29]

[25] Ibid., 480. [26] Ibid., 481. [27] Simonsohn, *Milan*, no. 2393.
[28] See Diena, *Responsa*, I, no. 103.
[29] See L. Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Life and Society in the Community of Arta . . ." [Hebrew], *Peamim* 45 (1991), 146.

Already, prior to the new ritual baths constructed in those Mediterranean communities as a more modest (and ritually less controversial) alternative to river immersion, the Jews of Treviso had turned to the great R. Judah Minz in nearby Padua, asking his opinion concerning three local disputes – one of which arose from disagreement about whether a ritual bath was needed, and who should pay for it.[30] Before then, it would appear, Treviso's Jewish women used one of the adjacent rivers, the Sile or the Botteniga, for their monthly ablutions.

Although the earliest Jewish residents of Treviso, mostly bankers and their families, were clustered in the Duomo quarter near the Botteniga river in the town's northern section, after a synagogue was constructed in the town's center early in the fifteenth century most of the Jews began to move there.[31] During the rebuilding of the synagogue, some of Treviso's Jews evidently proposed constructing an indoor *mikveh*, presumably adjacent to their place of worship – as was already the case in Trent[32] and would soon become the case in Venice. Other members of the community, including some with post-menopausal wives, preferred – as we learn from R. Minz – to continue the status quo. In their defense, it may be noted that the community was also facing higher-than-expected costs in rebuilding their synagogue.

Minz ruled in favor of the first group, instructing Treviso's Jews to build a *mikveh* in a discreet location near their place of dwelling, so that their wives could purify themselves "with proper care and without fear of harassment . . . whether in coming or going" from Jews or non-Jews.[33] Unlike Diena's later missive to Casalmaggiore, Minz's ruling regarding the construction of a *mikveh* came only after an internal dispute broke out in Treviso. He was presumably aware that river immersion was no innovation of Italian Jewry, although it may have been more popular south of the Alps than in the colder regions to the north.

Minz's older contemporary R. Israel Isserlein (d. 1460), perhaps the leading Ashkenazic rabbinical authority of his generation, was asked about the practice "in many villages and places" for married women to carry out

[30] Judah Minz, *Responsa* (Venice, 1553), no. 7.

[31] Angela Möschter, *Juden im venezianischen Treviso (1389–1509)* (Hannover, 2008), 99–105; Möschter, "Norme giuridiche e vita quotidiana; construzioni di 'interstizi' tra ebrei e cristiani bel tardo medioevo a Treviso," in U. Israel, R. Jütte, and R. C. Mueller, eds., *"Interstizi": Culture ebraico-cristiane a Venezia e nei suoi domini dal alto medioeveo all'età moderna* (Rome, 2010), 158–9, 162, 166. For an excellent map of late medieval Treviso showing the areas of Jewish residence, as well as the location of the two rivers, see ibid., 189.

[32] R. P. Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial* (New Haven, 1992), 107–9.

[33] Minz, *Responsa*, no. 7.

their monthly ablutions in local rivers. Isserlein acknowledged the reservations expressed by respected halakhists concerning the ritual acceptability of such immersion, but he also sought to justify the minority opinion that had been expressed by Rashi's grandson, R. Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam). Since, in some "villages and places to which the Jews had been dispersed," there were only "one or two or three" of their coreligionists, it was clearly not feasible in such places for a proper *mikveh* to be constructed. In those locations near a river, Isserlein argued, married women could not be expected to travel monthly to a community with a *mikveh*. If they were required to do so, he suggested, some women might become lax in performing immersion "as we have heard is the case in some distant lands, where rivers are not commonly found."[34] The Regensburg-born rabbi, who spent much of his life near the Danube and its tributaries, seems to have had few qualms about Jewish women in isolated communities immersing monthly in local waterways. He was also loath, following Ashkenazic tradition, to tamper with local custom.

Isserlein's loyal disciple, R. Joseph ben Moses (d. *c.* 1490), quoted a responsum by an Italian contemporary, a certain R. Veifush (Vivus), from which it is clear that in late fifteenth-century Venice, prior to the establishment of its ghetto (in 1516) and permanent Jewish community, Jewish women would perform their monthly ablutions in the city's famous canals.[35] During that period, several Ashkenazic moneylenders were active in Venice, among them Salomon of Piove di Sacco as well as the brothers Asher (Anselmo del Banco) and Mendlin (Mandolino) Meshullam.[36] The problem faced by the Jewish women of Venice was that, on some nights (depending on the season), the tide rose only at midnight, and until then the canals were not deep enough for ritual immersion. Should these women perform their pre-ablution preparations (washing their hair and bodies) early in the evening, as was their custom normally, or should they wait until shortly before midnight? R. Veifush, who seems to have hailed from Nuremberg,[37] recommended that they follow their normal custom so that the preparations be carried out thoroughly, "in a relaxed and unhurried manner." He apparently recognized that there was little point in

[34] Israel Isserlein, *Terumat ha-Deshen* (Warsaw, 1882), I, no. 254.

[35] Joseph ben Moses, *Leket Yosher*, ed. J. Freimann, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1903–4), II, 23–4. R. Veifush is presumably the same scholar mentioned by Isserlein in *Terumat ha-Deshen*, II, no. 62.

[36] See David Jacoby, "New Evidence on Jewish Bankers in Venice and the Venetian Terraferma (c. 1450–1550)," in A. Toaff and S. Schwarzfuchs, eds., *The Mediterranean and the Jews* (Ramat Gan, 1989), 151–78.

[37] See R. C. Mueller, "Banchi ebraici tra Mestre e Venezia e nei domini veneziani tra basso medioevo e prima epoca moderna," in Israel *et al.*, eds., "*Interstizi,*" 109, and the sources cited there.

recommending that a proper *mikveh* be constructed in the sort of temporary community then existing in Venice, and – unlike his younger Italian contemporary Diena – showed no particular concern with the nocturnal exposure of Jewish female flesh.

By the mid-1540s, the Venetian Ghetto, which had originally been intended for Jews of an Italian and Ashkenazic background, had been extended to include the *Ghetto nuovo*, for Levantine Jews hailing mostly from the eastern Mediterranean. And by that point there was at least one ritual bath serving the local Jewish community. Sometime after the arrival from Padua of R. Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen (1521–97) – great-grandson of R. Judah Minz – a major dispute arose concerning a seemingly trivial issue. Were women to go to the bathhouse only after dark in order to prepare for their monthly ablutions, or were they to do so before sundown? R. Samuel, with the support of his esteemed father – the aforementioned R. Meir Katzenellenbogen – ruled that, contrary to local Venetian custom, married women were to go out only after dark to prepare themselves for ritual immersion.[38] The Katzenellenbogens, furthermore, enlisted the support of two of Poland's greatest rabbis, Solomon Luria (d. 1573) and Moses Isserles (d. 1572).

Rabbis Luria and Isserles, who themselves were related, had earlier clashed on a number of issues, most notably concerning the status of philosophy in Judaism,[39] but both chose to side with the Katzenellenbogens in their dispute with the obscure rabbi Zelmeln Segal, who upheld the local Venetian custom. In his responsum, composed sometime after the mid-1540s, Luria asserted that the proposed change would help the Jewish women of Venice protect their modesty. "The bathhouse in their place of residence," he wrote, "is located in the synagogue's courtyard, and those congregated there recognize for what purpose the women are passing through, since it is not the custom there for women to attend evening services in the synagogue, and the modest ones [among the women] are embarrassed."[40] How the Polish rabbi knew of their embarrassment is not clear, but he also knew of a technical innovation instituted by his Italian relative in order to deflect criticism that women arriving after dark might rush through their preparations in order to get home (and into bed) quickly: an hourglass was to be placed in the

[38] On both Katzenellenbogens, see Elliott Horowitz, "Speaking of the Dead: The Emergence of the Eulogy among Italian Jewry of the Sixteenth Century," in D. B. Ruderman, ed., *Preachers of the Italian Ghetto* (Berkeley, 1992), 132–48.

[39] On the ideological differences between Isserles and Luria, see Moshe Rosman, "Innovative Tradition: Jewish Culture in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth," in Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews*, 542–5.

[40] For Luria's responsum, see *Responsa of Rabbi Moses Isserles*, ed. A. Siev (Jerusalem, 1970), no. 18.

bathhouse, and every woman undergoing ritual immersion would be required to spend at least an hour in preparations. In moving from the city's lagoons to a bathhouse adjacent to the local synagogue, ritual immersion in Venice seems to have gradually shifted from the autonomous sphere of women to the rigid supervision of rabbis – including two from distant Poland – just as decades earlier R. Azriel Diena had successfully intervened to pull Casalmaggiore's Jewish women away from the Po river and place them in a ritual setting he could control better. Religious life in early modernity was thus characterized less by laxity in observance than by increased rigidity in rabbinical control.

At around the same time that the two Polish rabbis were invited by their Italian relatives to intervene in the Venetian controversy concerning women's preparations for ritual immersion, their great Sephardic contemporary R. Joseph Karo (d. 1575) was asked by two Damascene scholars to resolve a local dispute of a similar nature. That controversy also arose with the arrival of a new rabbi, R. Joseph ibn Zayyaḥ, one of the two scholars who turned to Karo, then residing in nearby Safed. Ibn Zayyaḥ, who had earlier resided in Jerusalem – where he completed his kabbalistic treatise *Even ha-Shoham* in 1538 – came to Damascus early in the second half of the sixteenth century to serve as rabbi of the local Musta'arib community of Arabic-speaking Middle Eastern Jews.[41]

In keeping with their Middle Eastern roots, the Musta'arib Jews of Damascus were devotees of the *hammam*, and upon his arrival there ibn Zayyah discovered that "all the women's ritual immersions take place inside bathhouses owned by non-Jews." Those bathhouses served throughout the region, especially for women, the needs of both hygiene and sociability.[42] The situation in Damascus limited women's ritual immersion there to those (daytime) hours during which the public baths were open, with the result that – to ibn Zayyaḥ's horror – some Jewish women performed their immersions late in the seventh day after menstrual bleeding had ceased, rather than waiting until the eighth day. The new rabbi was even more troubled by another consequence of the Damascene arrangement: although the ritual baths were ordinarily locked, cold water was

[41] On R. Joseph, see Abraham David, *Immigration and Settlement in the Land of Israel in the Sixteenth Century* ([Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1993), 171–2, and the sources cited there.

[42] On bathing in the medieval and early modern Middle East, and the estimated numbers of bathhouses in various cities, see Janine Sourdel-Thomine, "Hammam," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. III (Leiden, 1971), 139–40. See also Elliott Horowitz, "Between Cleanliness and Godliness: Aspects of Jewish Bathing in Medieval and Early Modern Times," in Elisheva Baumgarten, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, and Roni Weinstein, eds., *Tov Elem: Memory, Community, and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Societies – Essays in Honor of Robert Bonfil* (Jerusalem, 2011), 29–54.

sometimes poured – presumably during the summer months – into the hot baths in order to cool them down. This created the danger that the *mikveh* might, at the time of of a woman's immersion, contain less than 40 *se'ah* of "pure" (rain or spring) water, rendering her immersion ritually invalid – and thus tainting with sin her subsequent relations with her husband.[43]

In order to deal with both of these problems, Ibn Zayyaḥ, together with some local rabbinical colleagues – including R. Moses Barukh, Karo's other correspondent regarding the Damascus *mikveh* – decreed that women were to immerse themselves only after seven full days had passed. More practically, he replaced the old *mikveh* locks with new ones, whose keys were to be in the hands of only specially designated Jewish women – which did not particularly please those who were not given keys. "As this had not been their custom since earliest times," Ibn Zayyaḥ reported to Karo, "they broke the locks and continued to immerse according to their own custom." According to Barukh's own letter to the Safed sage, the new arrangement had lasted no longer than a month or two.[44]

Where the two Damascus rabbis differed was with regard to "Plan B." Ibn Zayyaḥ, the newcomer from Jerusalem, had less regard for local custom, and also recognized the difficulties in identifying the female transgressors. "Since they are women," he wrote to Karo, "we do not know who they are, and therefore cannot chastise them." His colleague Moses Barukh felt that, after failing to change the immersion habits of Damascus women, the next move was to re-examine the local tradition they had followed to see whether it was more acceptable than had originally been thought. Since the ritual baths located in the local bathhouses contained much more than the minimum volume necessary for purification, and since their waters came directly from local springs – which could technically be used for immersion – R. Moses was not worried about cold water being taken to cool the hot baths in those bathhouses. Concerning those women who continued to immerse themselves on the seventh day – something which the new and improved system could, in any case, have done little to change – he chose to remain silent. The great Joseph Karo ruled in favor of his more lenient opinion, and even praised "those earlier rabbis" of Damascus who did not object to local practice. Without mentioning Ibn Zayyaḥ by name, Karo pointedly suggested that "it would have been better if those later rabbis, who chose to raise objections in this matter, had objected rather to the ritual bath in Hammath

[43] Ibn Zayyaḥ's letter to Joseph Karo appears in Karo, *Sefer Avkat Rokhel* (Leipzig, 1859), no. 58.

[44] Ibid., 59. The two queries from Damascus, as well as Karo's reply, are briefly discussed in Ruth Lamdan, *A Separate People: Jewish Women in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden, 2000), 75.

(near Tiberias)."[45] In that instance, Ibn Zayyaḥ had actually shown considerable sympathy for local custom, arguing in a letter to Karo that "although the residents of that place are not strictly observant ("benei Torah"), it would be wrong to reproach them with the claim that both they and their sons had been impurely conceived ("benei niddah").[46]

This distinction between minor aberration from normative standards and major transgression of biblical prohibitions, which characterized the jagged Judaism of late medieval times, came under threat during early modernity due – among other things – to the increasing impact of Kabbalah upon religious praxis, in which Karo himself played a critical role.[47] His great code, the *Shulḥan Arukh*, also contributed to the declining respect for local custom – an important component in that jaggedness – and, as Elhanan Reiner has observed, even the glosses added by Moses Isserles "discarded rather than preserved the bulk of the corpus of Ashkenazi customs left over" from medieval times.[48] This, it may be argued, allowed for differences in religious practice to be perceived less as local variations than as differences in degree of piety. The collective codification efforts of Karo and Isserles helped to drive a wedge between those who were merely observant in the manner of their forebears and those who adhered strictly to newly standardized requirements. The new standards often drew upon ritual demands rooted in kabbalistic texts, primarily the Zohar, whose practical implications had remained largely dormant until the sixteenth century.[49] Those kabbalistic texts could infuse heretofore minor misdemeanors that were often overlooked, such as dallying with non-Jewish women or drinking wine produced by gentiles – both more common on the road than at home – with mythic and even metaphysical significance.

GENTILE WINE AND JEWISH GEOGRAPHY

Although the Zohar's condemnation of conveying "holy seed" into the infernal recesses of the "other side" through sexual relations with non-

[45] Karo, *Avkat Rokhel*, no. 60.

[46] For the (presumably) earlier exchange between the two with regard to the *mikveh* of Hammath, see ibid., nos. 54–5.

[47] See, especially, Jacob Katz, "Post-Zoharic Relations between Halakhah and Kabbalah," in B. D. Cooperman, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 283–307.

[48] Elhanan Reiner, "The Ashkenazi Élite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book," *Polin* 10 (1997), 97.

[49] See Katz, "Post-Zoharic Relations," and G. G. Scholem, "Tradition and New Creation in the Ritual of the Kabbalists," in Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, trans. R. Manheim (New York, 1965), 158–204.

Jewish women dovetailed with the views of other late medieval Spanish moralists,[50] its equally mythic conception of "gentile wine" defiling its imbibers in both "spirit and body" was less immediately influential,[51] though it may help to explain the strict abstinence encountered in late fifteenth-century Sicily and elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean by R. Obadiah and other Jewish travelers.[52] The mythic notion of "gentile wine" conferring impurity upon the soul of its imbiber found widespread textual expression only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in such works as Menaḥem ha-Bavli's *Ta'amei ha-Mitzvot* (on the reasons for the commandments) and Isaiah Horowitz's highly influential *Shne Luḥot ha-Berit* – the book that Glückel of Hameln's husband asked for at his deathbed in 1689.[53]

The former was first published in Lublin in 1571 but had been composed in Palestine some two decades earlier. Its author, who had emigrated there from Mediterranean Europe, reported that in his youth he had encountered "men of good deeds who imposed a stricter standard upon themselves" with regard to gentile wine. These pious men "refused to drink wine that had been looked at by a non-Jew," even though it had not been touched by the latter, contending that "since he had set his eyes upon it, no good fortune could arise from it." By way of additional explanation for this "venerable custom," R. Menaḥem observed that "when an uncircumcised person takes in the wine's color or its bouquet, his mind desires it," and this desire, he argued, renders the wine undrinkable since, as the talmudic sages taught, "the thoughts of a gentile are generally directed towards idolatry."[54] His comments on the mere gaze of a non-Jew rendering otherwise "kosher" wine ritually impermissible, a Jewish variant on the Levantine notion of the "evil eye" causing damage to food and drink,[55] were later quoted approvingly by the Prague-born Horowitz in his widely

[50] See David Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (New York, 1992), 110.

[51] See *Zohar*, III, 40a–b, translated with annotations in Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: Texts from the Book of Splendour* [Hebrew], 2 vols., 3rd edn. (Jerusalem, 1971), II, 477–8. See also the English translation by Goldstein: *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, trans D. Goldstein, 3 vols. (London, 1989), III, 1211–12.

[52] Horowitz, "Toward a Social History," 140–50.

[53] See Beth-Zion Abrahams, ed., *The Life of Glückel of Hameln . . . Written by Herself* (London, 1962), 108–9.

[54] Menaḥem ha-Bavli, *Ta'amei ha-Mitzvot* (1888 edn.), quoted by Daniel Sperber in his *Minhagei Yisrael*, vol. IV (Jerusalem, 1995), 277. On R. Menaḥem's biography, see David, *Immigration and Settlement*, 193.

[55] For the belief that "'in the food that is coveted' (or upon which an envious eye has fallen) 'there is no blessing,'" see E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1895 [1836]), 160; Y. K. Stillman, "The Evil Eye in Morocco," in D. Noy and I. Ben-Ami, eds., *Folklore Research Studies*, 1 (1970), 83.

influential *Shnei Luḥot ha-Berit* – "perhaps the most important work of kabbalistic ethical literature" – completed after his own arrival in Palestine during the early 1620s, but first published only in 1648.[56]

R. Menaḥem's comments may well have had an even stronger impact upon Horowitz's older contemporary R. Judah Loew ben Bezalel (d. 1609), better known as "the Maharal," who had served for two decades as a rabbi in Moravia before moving from there to Prague and then Poznan (Posen). In 1650, the council of the Moravian communities reiterated an earlier decision that no one who drank "wine of the gentiles" could hold communal office or lead services in any synagogue, whether during the High Holidays or in the rest of the year. Such a person's oath would, furthermore, be considered inadmissible and he would be "distanced [from the community] to every degree, and in whatever manner, possible."[57] As the Moravian statutes themselves indicated, the person behind the new trend was the late great Maharal, who had publicized a ban on drinking "gentile wine" and, as Jacob Katz wrote, "used every means of public censure to enforce this ruling."[58] In fact, the text of the ban was based on a sermon, later published, that Maharal delivered in Poznan soon after his arrival there in 1592. In both that sermon and others he developed the notion, rooted in the Zohar, that drinking "wine of the gentiles" was, as Katz has further noted, not "merely a ritual infraction of a secondary rank," but a prohibition of "metaphysical status," rendering anyone transgressing it "as having withdrawn from the heavenly community of Israel."[59]

During his years in Moravia, however, the Prague native must have recognized that Jews in wine-drinking parts of Europe had greater difficulty in finding potable beverages than those in such regions as Bohemia, where beer was freely available. This difficulty became particularly burdensome, especially for those on the road, during the hotter summer months. Isserles, in his aforementioned responsum to a query from Moravia – which may have come from the Maharal himself – had been loath to

[56] Isaiah Horowitz, *Shnei Luḥot ha-Berit, Sha'ar ha-Otiot* (Jerusalem, 1946 [reprint of Amsterdam, 1698]), 76b–77a. For the description of Horowitz's work, see Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching, 1200–1800: An Anthology* (New Haven, 1989), 322 n. 57; and for evidence of its influence, see also ibid., 344, 414–16.

[57] Israel Halpern, ed., *Constitutiones Congressus Generalis Judaeorum Moraviensium* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1951), 89–90.

[58] Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, 23. As Katz noted (264 n. 24), the minute-books of some of the Moravian communities included a special *mi she-berakh* blessing, attributed to the Maharal, for those who abstained from drinking gentile wine. See Halpern, ed., *Constitutiones*, 89 n. 8.

[59] Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, 23; Byron Sherwin, *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent* (London, 1982), 95–102.

express himself freely, for fear that "sinners might find justification for their actions, and behave with even greater laxity" – perhaps suggesting that they might drink non-Jewish wine at home and not only while traveling. As scholars have shown, some central European countries, such as Hungary and Moravia, were transected by a "beverage line" – south of which grapes were cultivated and wine freely available, and north of which the local beverage was primarily beer. The northern limit of the vine in Europe, as Fernand Braudel observed, "may be traced broadly from the mouth of the Loire in France, across the continent to join the Rhine near Mainz, then following the Danube . . . to reach its most easterly point, the Crimea." When wines from the south arrived in "this vineless Europe," they were everywhere, as Braudel further noted, "an occasion for festivity and for excess."[60]

Although wines were imported to Krakow, where Isserles resided, not only from Germany and France (via Nuremberg or Gdansk) but also from Italy (via Vienna and Oswiecim),[61] these had to be specially treated in order to avoid spoilage. By contrast, excellent wines from neighboring Moravia and Hungary could be transported more easily (and cheaply) to markets in Krakow, where they arrived every year toward September and were so prized that they could not be sold "without guarantee of their origin." At all times of the year there was abundant beer, of which Krakow boasted six varieties (one more than Warsaw).[62] During the sixteenth century, most of Krakow's beer imports came from Gdansk and Silesia, from which region nearly 15,000 liters were imported in 1584.[63] A long-time resident of Krakow such as Isserles, who died there in 1572, could presumably understand why Jews in such wine-growing regions as Moravia[64] might be more easily tempted than those in such beer-swilling cities as his own to imbibe, especially when away from home, the excellent and widely available wine of the local gentiles.

[60] Braudel and Spooner, "Prices in Europe," 408–10. I have attributed the quoted passages to Braudel rather than Spooner since the latter was responsible only for the calculations on which their study was based.

[61] F. W. Carter, *Trade and Urban Development in Poland: An Economic Geography of Cracow, from its Origins to 1795* (Cambridge, 1994), 160, 304.

[62] F. W. Carter, "Cracow's Wine Trade (Fourteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 65 (1987), 541, 553; Braudel and Spooner, "Prices in Europe," 410–11. For Poles despising early modern Italian merchants for preferring "wine and salads to beer and roast meat," see David Gilmour, *The Pursuit of Italy* (New York, 2011), 26.

[63] Carter, *Trade and Urban Development*, 162, 317–18.

[64] In 1624, some 13,000 liters of Moravian wine came into Krakow, nearly a quarter through a Jewish merchant residing in southern Moravia. See ibid., 311, 483 nn. 696–7.

Side by side with the efforts in central Europe, spearheaded by the Maharal, to delegitimize both the drinking and the drinkers of gentile wine, such efforts also gained force in the Ottoman Empire, whose late sixteenth-century rabbis were also influenced by the (recently published) Zohar and by R. Menaḥem's work on the commandments. In 1589, the rabbis of Salonika issued a strict warning concerning the prohibition of gentile wine,[65] singling out Italian Jews, particularly those of Venice, as major transgressors, similar to how their northern European colleagues had singled out Moravian Jewry. In both instances, rabbis from regions in which the temptation to drink gentile wine was weaker, whether because beer was widely available or because the majority religion prohibited alcoholic beverages, sought to curb the laxity of Jews living in areas where wine was both good and plentiful. The major force behind the 1589 letter, which was signed by eight rabbis, was probably R. Joseph Pardo, who several years earlier had emigrated from Salonika to Venice, where he was involved in Hebrew printing.[66]

Another Salonikan native who sought – presumably under Pardo's influence and possibly with his direct encouragement – to wean Italian Jews away from "gentile wine" was R. Baruch ben Baruch, who had during the 1590s been active in trade between the eastern Mediterranean and Venice, where his commentary on Ecclesiastes was published late in that decade.[67] During a visit to Verona in the summer of 1597, R. Baruch generously donated funds for the preparation of "at least twenty wagon loads" of wine, stipulating that "at each meal at which ten shall gather . . . only kosher wine shall be brought to the table . . . to be purchased by the host, if he has none at home, from this 'wine preserved in its grapes.'"[68] Those last words – "yayin ha-meshumar me-'anavav" – were used by the community's scribe and rabbi (Abraham Menaḥem Cohen-Porto) as an artful allusion not merely to a talmudic phrase (B. Berakhot 34b) describing the fine wine awaiting the righteous in the next world, but to the later zoharic passage in which wine produced by Jews "in sanctity" was linked

[65] See Nathan Shapira, *Yayin ha-Meshumar* (Venice, 1660), 3b; Gershon Cohen, "On the History of the Controversy in Italy Regarding Gentile Wine, and its Sources" [Hebrew] *Sinai* 77 (1975), 62ff.; Meir Benayahu, *Relations between Greek and Italian Jewry* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1980), 174–7.

[66] On Pardo and his activities in Venice, see Benayahu, *Relations*, 173–81.

[67] On R. Barukh's commentary, see ibid., 189–92. On his mercantile activities between 1593 and 1606, see Alberto Tenenti, *Naufrages, corsairs . . . à Venise (1592–1609)* (Paris, 1959), index, s. v. "Baruch Bembaruch."

[68] *Minutes Book of the Jewish Community of Verona* [Hebrew], ed. Y. Boksenboim, 3 vols. (Tel Aviv, 1989–90), II, 538.

with the spiritual abundance stored in the divine sephirah of *binah*.[69] This phrase had also been used, as the Veronese rabbi may well have known,[70] by Menaḥem ha-Bavli, in his *Ta'amei ha-Mitzvoṭ*, when attempting to explain why some pious Jews refused to drink wine upon which a non-Jew had merely gazed.

During the summer of 1600, three years after R. Barukh's consequential visit, the Venetian rabbi Leon Modena (1571–1648), whose poem in honor of the Salonikan scholar had been published in the latter's Ecclesiastes commentary, wrote to the Jews of Verona – perhaps at R. Baruch's request – chastising them for having again fallen into laxity with regard to "gentile wine." Modena opened with praise of their original efforts: "Have we not been told from the very first (Is. 40:20), in past days, of your considerable and laudable efforts to establish a hedge between the vineyards (Numbers 22:24) by creating a holy confraternity . . . dedicated to kosher wine and its consumption in accordance with the Law (Esther 1:8)?"[71] This, he suggested, had implications for encouraging abstinence from "non-kosher" wine elsewhere in Italy beyond Verona, which had probably been R. Baruch's original intent: "And we heard, and our hearts were glad, and there was no spirit left (Joshua 2:11) among those few foolish people, scoffers, at the commandments, upon seeing that men . . . as prominent as yourselves arose to restrain themselves in this matter." Now, however, that the Jews of Verona "have been gathered . . . in a Ghetto," Modena continued, "you no longer have kosher grapes on the vine (Jeremiah 8:13), as in the past, and all hands, or at least most, have forsaken this commandment."[72]

Whether or not the ghettoization of Verona's Jews, more than four-score years after their Venetian coreligionists, actually played a role in the local availability of kosher wine, Modena's letter testifies to the limited impact of recent efforts by Ottoman rabbis to wean Italian Jews away from gentile wine. Italian rabbis, for their part, as Modena himself would later observe, were far less sanguine about the possibility of changing local practice – partially because they themselves were among the transgressors.

[69] For the zoharic passage, see Horowitz, "Toward a Social History," 140–50.

[70] On R. Abraham Menaḥem Porto Ha-Kohen, who served in the Cremona rabbinate before coming to Verona, and on his knowledge of Kabbalah, see Robert Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy*, trans. J. Chipman (Oxford, 1993), index, *s.v.*; Boksenboim ed. *Minutes Book*, I, 302–305.

[71] On Jewish confraternities in Venice, see Elliott Horowitz, "Processions, Piety, and Jewish Confraternities," in R. C. Davis and B. Ravid, eds., *The Jews of Early Modern Venice* (Baltimore, 2001), 231–47, and the literature cited there.

[72] *Letters of Rabbi Leon Modena* [Hebrew], ed. Y. Boksenboim (Tel Aviv, 1984), 246. A looser translation by S. W. Baron, based on an earlier edition of Modena's letter, appears in Franz Kobler, ed., *Letters of Jews Through the Ages*, 2 vols. (London, 1952), II, 407–8.

"STRINGENT WITH REGARD TO WATER AND LENIENT WITH REGARD TO WINE"

The degree to which this was true emerged during the early seventeenth-century controversy over a private *mikveh* that had been built in Rovigo, located south of Padua near the Adige river, by a wealthy local Jew. R. Abtalion Consiglio, the local rabbi who had ruled it ritually unacceptable, was snidely accused by his Venetian colleague R. Judah Saltaro Fano of being "stringent with regard to water and lenient with regard to wine." Among R. Abtalion's colleagues in the "stringent" camp was R. Moses Cohen Porto of Venice, a friend of and frequent correspondent with Leon Modena, who had resided in Rovigo during the early stages of the controversy.[73] In his *Palgei Mayim* (1608), published in support of his beleaguered former neighbor (who was also a relative), R. Moses had originally intended to include a letter by the Rovigo rabbi defending his personal practice in the matter of gentile wine. He prudently decided, however, to publish it separately.[74]

In his introduction to that letter, Cohen Porto explained that he was publishing it on behalf of "all those brave men who battle on the Torah's behalf, steadfast [in their observance] as well as numerous in the regions of Italy and its surroundings, who do not abstain from wine of the gentiles." Highlighting what was perhaps the letter's greatest revelation, R. Moses stressed that those "brave men" included "the Gaon our teacher R. Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen, who in his lifetime had also not been stringent in this matter; and he had good reason for this, as will be evident to . . . all willing and eager to read these words written by the esteemed and elevated R. Abtalion of Rovigo."

The letter itself opened with technical arguments, asserting that "a gentile's touch [of the wine] in our day may be presumed to be unintentional," and that the prohibition of gentile wine had originally been instituted "primarily in order to prevent intermarriage" – arguments that had been side-stepped by the Maharal and others who saw the prohibition

[73] On R. Judah Saltaro Fano, R. Moses Cohen Porto, and Modena's relations with both, see *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi*, ed. and trans. Mark Cohen (Princeton, 1988), 30, 80, 137, 191; Benayahu, *Relations*, 161, 165–7; Boksenboim, ed., *Letters*, 56, 107, 110–13, 119, 122, 124–5, 135–8, 143–5, 162–3, 312–15.

[74] It was inserted selectively in only some copies of the book, only a few of which have survived. On the controversy, see Abraham Ya'ari, "An Unknown Document Concerning the Controversy in Rovigo" [Hebrew] in Ya'ari, *Mehkerei Sefer* (Jerusalem, 1958), 420–9; Kalman Schlesinger, "A Controversy Concerning Gentile Wine in Italy in the Year 1608" [Hebrew], in B. Kurzweill, ed., *Yuval Shai* (Ramat Gan, 1958), 211–20; David Malkiel, *A Separate Republic: The Mechanics and Dynamics of Venetian Jewish Self-Government, 1607–1624* (Jerusalem, 1991), 265–6.

in mythic and even metaphysical terms. But its author then provided a rare and revealing rabbinical confession concerning the difficulties, practical as well as psychological, of maintaining higher ritual standards than the other members of one's household. R. Abtalion had stopped abstaining from gentile wine "after coming to realize that this commandment cannot be observed properly unless I produce my own wine and also maintain constant supervision over all wine-related utensils." In theory, he could not allow any Jew who drank gentile wine to enter his home, "since it is well known that anyone who does not observe this prohibition cannot be trusted in matters relating to it." He therefore "abandoned this abstemious practice, for it made no sense to live as a couple in one home, with the man abstaining from drinking [gentile wine] but not his wife, and furthermore with him buying her [non-kosher] wine in the market, so that she need not draw upon his private stock." Similarly, it made no sense "to buy wine presumed to be kosher from those, both the merchants and those responsible for delivery, who could not reliably vouch for its ritual permissibility," since they themselves did not observe the prohibition. "Doing so," he wrote, "would be mere hypocrisy and fraudulence." Although he "greatly approved of stringency in this matter, and greatly admired those who earnestly observed" the prohibition, "nonetheless as long as I cannot observe it properly my heart does not allow me to don the cloak of this particular renunciation."

R. Abtalion felt, moreover, that he could "rely with certainty upon the great authority of our teacher, R. Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen of blessed memory, who also was lax in this matter, as is well known." He reported that once, while discussing this question with the late Venetian rabbi, "he finally said to me that in truth drinking wine with them [gentiles] was prohibited since it might lead to intermarriage, but to buy wine from them and drink it in my home, what possibility of marriage is there in that?" R. Abtalion's defense of his own practice came at the considerable price of revealing something about the late Venetian rabbi that had been known to a select few but had never appeared in print. It is hardly surprising that Cohen Porto decided to delete his former colleague's bold letter from his 1608 volume, publishing it rather in a "limited edition." And it is no less surprising that R. Abtalion protested afterwards that his letter had been circulated against his will, expressing remorse that it had apparently caused "many who previously had abstained from drinking wine of the gentiles to throw off the yoke and burst the bonds (cf Jer. 5;5) . . . something which, heaven forbid, I had never intended."[75]

[75] Schlesinger, "A Controversy Concerning Gentile Wine," 216–17.

One of those who read the letter with approval and even enthusiasm was Leon Modena, who, during the controversy's early stages, had been torn between his friend and Venetian colleague Cohen Porto – the leader of R. Abtalion's "lenient" supporters on the matter of Rovigo's ritual bath – and his relative R. Judah Fano, the leader of the *mikveh*'s "stringent" opponents. Early in the summer of 1608, Modena wrote to R. Abtalion himself, expressing a rather different position regarding the prohibition of gentile wine from that eight years earlier, in his censorious letter to the Jews of Verona. Now he was quite critical of those non-Italian rabbis for whom gentile wine was not as serious a temptation as for those residing in Italy, and who "yet speak with grand pomposity about the matter, seeking to impose upon us a ban regarding the prohibition." He had also begun to wonder: "Why it was that the great ones of the world and pillars of the earth (I Sam. 2:8) from previous centuries until the present, the heads of the academies of Italian Jewry, were not stringent [in this matter]; and if they themselves were stringent, they nonetheless issued no warnings against nor criticisms of those who committed this ostensibly serious sin."[76]

After his eyes had been opened, Modena sought to determine the severity of the prohibition of gentile wine, "and I found it far less severe than the impression created by these pious self-deniers (*perushim*)." This led him to wonder why his fellow rabbis of native Italian background had not stood up "to defend themselves and their ancestors, so that those afar will know that the *Italiani* are truly Jews . . . and that they fear the God of Israel no less than the other descendants of Jacob who surround them."[77] Upon the appearance of R. Abtalion's (not yet disavowed) pamphlet, he was therefore quite thrilled:

> This is the day I have hoped for and have lived to see (Lam. 2:16), for it spoke in righteousness, mighty to save (Is. 63:1) these [Italiani Jews], but in a balanced manner, not granting absolute permission [to drink gentile wine], but seeking rather to defend the many who drink [such] wine [merely] to slake their thirsts. As you live, my Lord (I Sam. 1:26), it was a day for me of good news (II K 7:9).[78]

The problem, however, was that some of Modena's Venetian rabbinical colleagues "have now risen up and awakened . . . till the earth was split open by their uproar (IK 1:40)." Although he had initially remained silent when those rabbis had discussed R. Abtalion's revealing letter, Modena now felt the need to warn its author that "they have made an alliance against you (Ps. 83:6)." He also reiterated his own unequivocal support: "Is

[76] Boksenboim, ed., *Letters*, 135–6. [77] Ibid., 136.
[78] The translation of the last words follows Boksenboim's emendation (ibid., n. 9).

it not worthy . . . to attempt to justify the actions of one's ancestors and teachers, as well as the fellow residents of one's homeland, against those who were accustomed since youth, in their own lands, to drink water and beer but sanctify themselves on wine." Those sanctimonious rabbis, who used wine primarily for sanctifying the Sabbath but otherwise imbibed other beverages, were worried, Modena explained, that some Jews who still abstained from wine of the gentiles would become less stringent in their practice. "Is it not better," he replied, "to defend thousands of the virtuous living and dead, as well as great rabbis who did not and do not protest [against drinking gentile wine], than to worry about a few dozen individuals who might become lax" in their observance of the prohibition?[79]

Later in the seventeenth century, such leading north Italian rabbis as Samuel Aboab (1694) and Moses Zacuto (d. 1697) continued to wrestle with the consequences of this phenomenon. Zacuto was asked about a certain rabbinic scholar who "prepares wine at home, for his own consumption, according to the highest standards of kashrut, and also when visiting another city only drinks kosher wine. However, while on the road, when staying at an inn among the gentiles, and having no other wine to drink but theirs, he does so." This scholar had sent a sealed casket of his own wine to a colleague in another city, who was uncertain as to whether the sender could be trusted in a ritual matter in which he himself was occasionally lax.[80]

A similar question was asked of Zacuto's Amsterdam-born colleague R. Samuel Aboab (d. 1694), with whom he overlapped in Venice for many years. Aboab was asked about someone who kept a cask of kosher wine in his home only for pious guests, but had no use for it himself. Both rabbis ruled similarly – namely, that the testimony of a person who himself did not abstain from "gentile wine" could not be accepted in such matters. Aboab, who, like Zacuto, had been born to a family of former Marranos, testified that some Jews even mocked their more stringent coreligionists who insisted on drinking only "kosher" wine.[81]

But in early modern times erstwhile mockers of the more stringent could themselves eventually take on those same stringencies, especially during times of messianic excitement. This occurred in Italy and elsewhere in western Europe during the mid-1660s, after reports arrived from the Middle East concerning the messianic hopes associated with Sabbatai Zevi. A Hebrew letter sent in early 1666 from Senigallia, on Italy's Adriatic coast, reported that in a nearby city, evidently Venice, "they are practicing penances . . . the like of which would not have been believed

[79] Ibid., 136–7. [80] Moses Zacuto, *Responsa* (Venice, 1761), no. 50.
[81] Samuel Aboab, *Responsa Devar Shmuel* (Venice, 1702), no. 175. See also nos. 49, 69.

before." One of the decrees enacted in preparation for the messiah's imminent arrival was that henceforth both *havdalah* (at the Sabbath's conclusion) and *kiddush* (on Friday evening) would be performed exclusively with "ritually permitted wine."[82] Of course, no one thought, even during such a time of acute messianic excitement, of decreeing that, also while traveling, Italian Jews would drink only "kosher" wine. Unlike central or northern Europe, there was no beer to be had.

Zacuto's disciple R. Benjamin ha-Kohen Vitale (d. 1730), who had continued to sympathize with Sabbateanism even after his teacher broke with the movement,[83] dealt in one of his responsa with yet another rabbi who drank gentile wine – and whose testimony concerning a betrothal he had witnessed was invalidated on that basis by an Italian colleague. The story behind the question, which was probably sent to Reggio where R. Benjamin served as rabbi from 1682 until his death, also reflects other aspects of contemporary Jewish life in Italy. A man of 60, whose dying wife had borne him no children, called a rabbi to his home during her last days and, swearing him to secrecy, informed the rabbi that his wife had requested that he marry her (much younger) great- niece – which he was eager to do as soon as possible. The rabbi raised the problem of Rabbenu Gershom's (eleventh-century) ban against polygamy, but the man was adamant, saying that he would bear all responsibility. He then led the rabbi into an adjoining room where the young bride-to-be and her parents were waiting, and in the presence of both the rabbi and another witness performed the betrothal ceremony – but not that of marriage, which was postponed until after his (first) wife's death.[84]

The groom found himself so desirous of consummating his new marriage that he informed the girl's father of his intention to do so that very (Friday) night. The latter, realizing that he could do little to prevent this since his daughter was already living in her fiancé's home, consulted the rabbi before whom she had been betrothed. He also realized that he too could do little to stop the 60-year-old soon-to-be widower from pursuing his plan, and quickly wrote out a marriage contract (*ketubah*) that was then signed by the two betrothal witnesses, but no further ceremony was performed. The groom, having bedded his new bride, assured his new father-in-law that, after his wife's death, a proper wedding ceremony would be conducted, with all the necessary (seven) blessings.

[82] G. G. Scholem, *Sabbetai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676* (Princeton, 1973), 482–3.

[83] G. G. Scholem, "Benjamin ben Eliezer ha-Kohen Vitale of Reggio," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. IV (Jerusalem, 1972), 531–2; *Kabbalah* (New York, 1974), 275, 449–51. On Zacuto's moderate and short-lived belief in Sabbateanism, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 501–3.

[84] *Responsa of Benjamin ha-Kohen*, ed. Isaac Nissim (Jerusalem, 1970), *Even ha-Ezer*, no. 71.

Later, 30 days after the first wife's death, when the official period of mourning was over, the bride's father reminded his son-in-law of his promise, but the latter put him off for an entire year. By then the father-in-law had occasion to host a more serious rabbinical scholar in his home, and told him the entire story. The visiting scholar, who understandably found fault with the local rabbi's behavior, soon discovered that both he and his sons regularly drank gentile wine – as did the additional witness to the betrothal ceremony. The latter was also in the habit of shaving his face with a razor, rather than merely trimming his beard with scissors, a transgression that became rampant both in Italy and elsewhere in Europe during the seventeenth century as the full beard, which had been fashionable for most of the previous century, began to go out of style. The visiting scholar was of the opinion that the original betrothal was null and void, since neither person before whom it was performed was sufficiently pious to serve as a witness. The girl was therefore free to marry another man without risk of adultery. R. Benjamin, who was shocked when his erstwhile disciple Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto claimed to be visited by an angelic *magid* though he had neither a wife nor a beard, concurred with this pragmatic judgment.[85] One suspects, however, that witnesses to a less problematic betrothal would not have been disqualified by either rabbi on the basis of their drinking or shaving habits – which were shared by most Italian Jewish men at the time.

This was noticed as early as 1660 by the Palestinian emissary Nathan Shapira (Spiro), formerly a disciple of Ḥayyim Vital, who in that year published a work of kabbalistic social criticism in Venice under the title *Yayin ha-Meshumar*.[86] R. Nathan's shocking claim therein, that some Italian Jews even used gentile wine for *kiddush* on Friday night and *havdalah* at Sabbath's end, was soon to be confirmed by the aforementioned letter from Senigallia.[87] Like Isaiah Horowitz before him, Shapira quoted Menaḥem ha-Bavli's sixteenth-century testimony that "men of good deeds" avoided even wine that had been merely looked at by a non-Jew, but added a further stricture – that it was prohibited to teach kabbalistic secrets to anyone who did not abstain from "gentile wine." The Palestinian emissary argued further, perhaps on the basis of teachings

[85] On the change in facial hair styles and its impact on Jewish society, see Horowitz, "The Early Eighteenth Century Confronts the Beard." On the earlier popularity of the full beard in sixteenth-century Europe, see Horowitz, "The New World and the Changing Face of Europe," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 28, 4 (1997), 1183–1201.

[86] See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 446, 449, 451.

[87] A similar remark was made by another Palestinian emissary, R. Ḥayyim Y. D. Azulai, regarding the Jews of late eighteenth-century Venice. See *The Diaries of Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azulai*, trans. B. Cymerman (Jerusalem, 1997), 95.

he had received from Vital, that one who drank such wine and tried to teach himself Kabbalah would be unable to grasp its inner truth, "for his study would be mixed with errors and inaccuracies." It was therefore also prohibited, Shapira claimed, "to hear and accept" teachings from such a person.[88]

The very need to warn his readers not to accept kabbalistic teachings from anyone who even occasionally drank gentile wine indicates how deeply laxity with regard to that prohibition had penetrated the learned elite. This, of course, was quite different from what he had encountered in the largely Muslim Middle East, where no self-respecting rabbi would ever drink "gentile" wine – which, in fact, was not widely available. Nor would such a rabbi be tempted to shave or even trim his beard – the other "transgression" against which Shapira railed in his 1660 work – in a region where the full beard was universally regarded as a sign of masculine honor.

Similarly, in his *Leket ha-Kemaḥ*, which he published in Amsterdam in 1707, another Palestinian emissary, the Jerusalem-born Moses Ḥagiz, juxtaposed the laws of prohibited shaving with those of wine produced or touched by gentiles.[89] His decision to combine these ostensibly unrelated subjects was clearly linked, as in the case of Shapira's earlier work, less with any inherent similarities between the two (although both technically belonged to the halakhic rubric of *Yoreh Deah*) than with the enormity of the offense that kabbalists had attributed to each – as well as the perceived sociology of their transgression. Like Shapira, Ḥagiz was evidently under the impression that those European Jews who shaved in a prohibited manner – in order to resemble their gentile neighbors more closely – were also the ones who were less careful about avoiding gentile wine. Indeed, during the 1720s, R. Joseph Ergas of Livorno reported hearing that, whenever tensions ran high in Ottoman cities between local Jews and their European coreligionists, who were known as "Francos," the latter would be scoffed at for shaving their beards and drinking "wine of the gentiles."[90]

Both Shapira and Ḥagiz had come to Europe from a largely Islamic region in which alcohol was taboo and self-respecting men wore long beards they sometimes swore by. How strange for them to encounter ostensibly observant coreligionists who neither prized their beards – which kabbalistic texts

[88] Nathan Shapira, *Yayin ha-Meshumar* (Venice, 1660), 8b, 18b.

[89] Moses Ḥagiz, *Leket ha-Kemah* (Amsterdam, 1707), 29a–32a. On Ḥagiz, see Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatean Controversies* (New York, 1994).

[90] R. Joseph Ergas, *Responsa. Divrei Yosef* (Livorno, 1742). On Ergas, see Horowitz, "The Early Eighteenth Century Confronts the Beard," 101.

had linked with the divine conduits of grace – nor avoided gentile wine, whose metaphysical dangers had been magnified by successive generations of kabbalists. In truth, those metaphysical dangers seem to have multiplied in response to growing laxity –in both Italy and such central European regions as Moravia – on the part of otherwise observant Jews who included (at least in Italy) some rabbis in their ranks. The rabbis in particular recognized that the prohibition of gentile wine, unlike that of shaving with a razor, was merely a "rabbinical" one that could be set aside under circumstances of hardship. Similarly, the Palestinian-educated emissaries who criticized European imbibers of such prohibited wine also recognized that, without the kabbalistic overlay they brought to it, the prohibition was not a particularly serious one. The war they waged was thus not over the future of Judaism in Europe, but over the future of kabbalistic Judaism in Europe.

As in all wars, however, unforeseen circumstances could play crucial roles. Just as changing fashions in facial hair – from the full beard of the sixteenth century to the "Van Dyke" of the late seventeenth, and the clean-shaven look of the eighteenth – posed increasing difficulties for the kabbalistically mandated untrimmed beard, so too did changing tastes in beverages facilitate the recitation of kabbalistically inspired midnight prayers after coffee arrived in Europe from the Middle East during the seventeenth century.[91] A cleanly shaven participant in such midnight rites would have seemed as strange to an eighteenth-century Palestinian emissary in Italy as the cleanly shaven Luzzatto's claims to being visited by a celestial emissary were to his teacher R. Benjamin Vitale. But such paradoxes were – as we have seen – characteristic of early modern Jewish piety, as were the penitential practices eagerly embraced by former adulterers, or the rabbis who drank gentile wine only on the road. Early modern Jews lived in a deeply textured religious world dominated by shades of gray, despite recent attempts to portray them as shifting suddenly from medieval darkness to a whiter shade of pale.

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CHAPTER 26

JEWS, JUDAISM, AND THE VISUAL ARTS

MARC MICHAEL EPSTEIN

It seems almost obligatory for explorations of "Jewish art" to begin with a discussion of the allegedly crippling effect of the Second Commandment upon the entire production of visual culture by Jews.[1] In reality, rabbinic interpretation of that commandment was quite circumscribed and eminently reasonable, banning only the creation of three-dimensional works of art intended for worship by Jews. Therefore, Jews were free to create works of visual culture and did so throughout the ages with enthusiasm and creativity. In earlier periods, the works they produced were usually more in the realm of material culture than fine art *per se.* Before the sixteenth century, by far the largest number of monuments of "Jewish art" were two-dimensional, ranging from synagogue ornamentation and decoration to the illumination of books and manuscripts.[2] The primary role of such works of art was *hiddur mizvah* ("beautification of the performance of the commandments"), and so, although they can be very beautiful, they function more as material culture – in this case, tools of religious observance – than as monuments of esthetic creativity. In the West, *hiddur mizvah* could comprise both decorative and figurative/narrative art. Figurative art has obvious meaning – it tells a story, often with learned or subversive undertones; it is less obvious, however, whether decorative art is meaningful or not. The interpreter must be equally cautious to avoid both the assumption that non-figurative art is "merely" decorative, and the temptation to ascribe profound meaning to every decorative squiggle. Following the fashion of the wider society, and not – it should be

[1] For the classic review and critique of the literature, see Joseph Gutmann, "The 'Second Commandment' and the Image in Judaism," in Gutmann, ed., *No Graven Images: Studies in Art and the Hebrew Bible* (New York, 1971), 161–74. For developments since, see Lee Levine, *Visual Judaism in Late Antiquity: Historical Contexts of Jewish Art* (New Haven, 2013), esp. the Introduction.

[2] For a comprehensive survey, see Marc Michael Epstein, *Skies of Parchment, Seas of Ink: Jewish Manuscript Illumination* (Princeton, 2015).

stressed – because Muslims somehow suppressed Jewish artistic impulses, works of art made by and for Jews in the Ottoman Empire tended to be decorative. As such, their political agendas – if indeed they exist – are not particularly clear, and we must content ourselves here with the observation of stylistic confluence of these patterns and decoration with artistic trends in non-Jewish Ottoman society, and focus on the more quantifiable changes in the West.[3]

In western Europe, signal transformation took place in the sixteenth century, which represented a quantum shift toward the kind of self-conscious artistic production that I would argue characterizes this period in the realm of Jewish visual culture: Moses and Esther began to matter. Previously, for instance, the illustrated Passover *haggadah* had been as empty of visual reference to Moses as the traditional *haggadah* text is devoid of literary reference to him.[4] But with the advent of printed *haggadot*, one begins to note the increasing importance of depictions of events from the life of Moses. At the same time, emerging from similarly monied and often courtly milieus, one observes the creation of Esther scrolls illuminated with the narrative of the Purim story and featuring depictions of Esther and the ladies of Ahashverosh's court in pearls and *décolleté*, and of Mordekhai and the gentlemen of the court in black velvet and satin-lined capes.[5] While it is indisputable that ritual objects and illuminated manuscripts were produced throughout the Middle Ages in order to enhance the observance of the festivals, and that the narrative of the Exodus or the story of Purim was important to medieval Jews, these valorizations of the *protagonists* of the Passover and Purim narrative are extraordinary – a new phenomenon ushering in a new era of Jewish visuality.

Why should this be? Perhaps it was something about the printed text. Though the structure of the illuminated manuscript – in terms of the

[3] Narrative art in the style of epic Quranic and national heroic sagas only developed in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Persia. See Vera Basch Moreen, *Miniature Painting in Judaeo-Persian Manuscripts* (Cincinnati, 1985).

[4] David Arnow, "The Passover Haggadah: Moses and the Human Role in Redemption," *Judaism* (October 1, 2006), 4–28; David Henshke, "'The Lord Brought Us Forth From Egypt': On the Absence of Moses in the Passover Haggadah," *AJS Review* 31, 1 (April 2007), 61–73.

[5] For examples, see Vivian B. Mann, Richard I. Cohen, and Fritz Backhaus, eds., *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power 1600–1800* (Munich, 1996), published in conjunction with the exhibit of the same name held at the Jewish Museum in New York, September 8, 1996 – January 17, 1997. There are several essays in addition to the catalogue, examining the role of Jews as agents in the service of many kinds of patrons, and as patrons themselves.

format and placement of illustrations – was fairly rigid, its decoration and scribal embellishment could evince fluidity and a capacity for improvisation. Notes could be added in the micrographic form of animals, plants, and abstract designs; if a line ended short, the scribe could stretch the final word or letter to justify the edges of the column, etc. The illustrations here tended to serve as visual *midrash*, illuminating particular associative, even political, junctures in Jewish consciousness with reference to the story of the Exodus or of Purim. For instance, a Scroll of Esther might visually reference the Holy Roman Emperor and his consort (something it was now possible to do because the imperial visages were increasingly familiar to members of the general public due to their diffusion through print media), but it might place their images at junctures in the text that associated the monarchs with the drunken and dissolute King Ahashverosh and his proud and intransigent consort, Vashti. What appears to be honor thus becomes mockery, subtle if one does not read Hebrew, but rather explicit if one does.[6]

The format of the new printed *haggadot* was more rigid and literal, engraving on the mind a particular and "official" story of the Exodus, with replicable, identical engravings used to illustrate the text. Jewish visual tradition loses something of its fluidity in the "age of mechanical reproduction." But it gains something as well.

Jewish visual culture in early modernity differs from that produced in the medieval period which preceded it in its self-consciousness as art. It becomes more sophisticated in terms of its self-understanding as a medium of communication, commodification, and cultural reproduction. The early modern period is really the first historical context in which we find elaborately and finely crafted ritual objects in significant numbers. Very few ceremonial accouterments survive from the Middle Ages. This may be due to the vicissitudes of history which resulted in such objects becoming casualties of "cultural mobility" brought about by persecutions and expulsions.[7] The fact that more examples survive from the early modern period

[6] For an important (and very explicit) example, depicting a figure resembling Maria Theresa as Vashti, see Gertrude Hirschler, *Ashkenaz: The German Jewish Heritage* (New York, 1988), 277. This item had temporary accession number ASH.J.1035 in the exhibition held at the Yeshiva University Museum, New York, from January 1986 to the end of 1987.

[7] Some significant items survived, hidden after persecutions in the wake of the outbreak of the plague in 1348. A hoard was discovered at Colmar in 1863, but it was not until the 1998 discovery of another at Erfurt (where the entire Jewish population of around 1,000 had been massacred) that scholars awoke to the possibility of understanding the finds as evidence of the economic activities and daily life of these (and by extension, other) medieval Jewish communities, as well as of the precarious position in which Jews found

attests to the increasing wealth and perceived stability of communities, in decorating not only public contexts like synagogues, but private homes as well.[8]

Jewish visual culture in the early modern age imports a courtly style characteristic of certain monuments of medieval Sephardic and Ashkenazic art. In the Middle Ages, the Jews commissioning illuminated *siddurim* and *haggadot* did so in an environment in which wealthy and powerful Christians were also engaged in patronage of illuminated manuscripts – in their case, books of hours and psalters. In a Christian context, paintings of biblical events and the lives of saints might depict everyone but the main protagonists (and sometimes, in fact, including the main protagonists) wearing contemporary clothing, or portraits of the donors of the work itself might appear among the spectators of the event depicted. In medieval Jewish visual culture, those who commissioned the works of art (primarily manuscripts) often "put themselves in the picture" by depicting biblical protagonists as contemporary Jews, and, even more interestingly, by juxtaposing them with dignified, courtly portrayals of the non-Jewish protagonists. These characters, such as Pharaoh, for instance, are afforded this visual courtesy in spite of the understanding both in the text and in the culture that these persons are morally evil. The non-Jewish "villains" are visually undifferentiated from the Jewish "heroes."[9] This trend is continued among the courtly individuals in the early modern era who had the wherewithal to commission beautiful ritual objects, illuminated *haggadot* that followed printed models, and elaborate *megillot*. These works bear witness to a similar, but even more dramatic, sort of reflexive self-fashioning.[10]

No one knows exactly why illuminated *megillot* begin to appear in this period. It certainly seems reasonable to cite the increased prominence of Spanish exiles who had converted to Christianity, and now, in places like

themselves in Christian Europe. See the catalogue *Treasures of the Black Death* (London, 2009), edited by Christine Descatoire, with contributions by Marian Campbell, Christopher Cluse, Michel Dhénin, Johann M. Fritz, Timothy Husband, Oliver Meking, Jörg R. Müller, Mario Schlapke, Karin Sczech, and Maria Stürzebecher.

[8] See Michael Graetz, "Court Jews in Economics and Politics," in Mann *et al.*, eds., *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds*, 27–43. See also Richard I. Cohen, *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Oakland, 1998), 68–113.

[9] A prime example of this tendency is the so-called "Golden Haggadah" (London, BL Add. MS 11639, Catalonia, 1320–30) discussed in Marc Michael Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah: Art, Narrative and Religious Imagination* (New Haven, 2011), 129–77.

[10] The charming illustration of the Falk Family (?) at the *seder* table in the *haggadah* illustrated by Moshe Leib, son of Wolf of Trebitsch, raises questions of the reflexivity and projection of self-imaging: *Haggadah* ("Second Cincinnati Haggadah") (probably Moravia, 1717), Cincinnati, HUC Klau Library Ms. 444.1, fol. IV.

Italy and the Lowlands, were re-joining the Jewish fold. They brought with them a veneration of Esther, who is the quintessential *conversa* – concealing her Jewish identity in order to better the plight of her people. Court Jews and others in the community could doubtless relate to, and probably deeply respected, such a figure. The illuminated *megillah* was thus born of a threefold impetus: the wish to celebrate the figure of Esther; the relevance of the Book of Esther story of Jews serving at a royal court; and the inheritance of the patrons, from their parents and grandparents (who had served local and central royalty as "New Christians"), of a taste for courtly traditions of visual culture.

This example brings to light the fact that the most salient and lively characteristic of early modern Jewish visual culture is the transposition of forms and motifs present in the wider culture in a distinctively Jewish key or idiom. This tendency – which had been percolating throughout the previous millennium and a half (at least) of Jewish visual culture in a variety of societies in which Jews lived – comes to the fore in the early modern period and provides fascinating examples of cross-cultural collusion – even if unconscious – and the transference of motifs between milieus.

Once the religious monopoly of the Catholic Church was challenged, and Protestant architectural forms began to dot the landscape, synagogue architecture flourished in relationship with the variety of forms of sacred architecture now characterizing the Christian majority. Just as the rise of Protestantism broadened the stylistic possibilities for church architecture, so it did for synagogue architecture as well.[11] One finds examples of fine Counter-Reformation-style Baroque synagogue architecture in Italy, not only in Venice and in Padua, but also farther afield, in places like Casale Monferrato and Pitigliano, as well as in the Czech lands and Poland. In these synagogues, the elaborate Baroque altar at the front of the Christian structures was replaced as the focal point of the building with Torah shrines (*'aron kodesh*) of similar design, though devoid of the ubiquitous angelic figures populating Counter-Reformation Baroque architecture. The *bimah*, the raised platform at the center (or toward the back) of the synagogue used for the reading of the Torah, was increasingly a simulacrum of Bernini's *baldacchino.* Like the *bimah*, Bernini's famous canopy marks a centrally situated and ritually significant space in St. Peter's in the Vatican.[12]

[11] See Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning* (New York, 1985), 35–104.

[12] On the twisted columns of St. Peter's, see John B. Ward-Perkins, "The Shrine of St. Peter and its Twelve Spiral Columns," *Journal of Roman Studies* 42 (1952), 21–33. The carved, canopied *bimah* supported on "Solomonic" columns is found in the Scola

At the same time, the magnificent Amsterdam 'Esnoga (completed in 1675) and its imitator, Bevis Marks in London (1701), exhibit the clean lines and relative simplicity of classical Protestant churches, with pew-box style seating and the elimination of the too explicitly Catholic Berninian canopy.[13] The predilection here is for wood, rather than the marble or wood painted to imitate marble found in the Italian, Czech, and Polish synagogues. In the eighteenth century, as tastes in architecture – both Catholic and Protestant – began to merge into a distinctly "Empire" style, so too did synagogues in Vienna and Paris begin to mingle clean Biedemeier lines with touches of ormolu. In each case, the synagogues tend to fit harmoniously within the architectural settings of the majority cultures while maintaining the features necessary for a synagogue building. These include – when at all possible – an eastern orientation, skylights in appropriate locations to illumine the liturgical activity in particular parts of the building, specific architectural volumes, and concavities and symmetries designed to accommodate the distinctive needs of Jewish worship.[14] At the same time, for various reasons (some internally generated, and some externally legislated), synagogue architecture strived not to stand out overmuch in the larger urban context. Very often, as in the case of the London and Vienna synagogues, for instance, the buildings were set back from the street, within courtyards bounded and fronted by secular buildings, or were built in such a way that one descends a flight of steps upon entering them. This, of course, accords with the Psalmist's declaration, "from the depths I have called unto thee, O LORD" (Psalms 130:1), but it also allows the buildings to conform to the stipulation, legislated by rulers at various times in diverse places, that synagogue buildings should not exceed church buildings in height.[15]

Levantina in the Venetian Ghetto (the work of Andrea Brustolon, 1662–1732), as well as more rural synagogues such as the one in Cherasco, Italy, and more far-flung ones in Lithuania. For the importation of the "Solomonic" *bimah* to east Europe, see Sergey R. Kravtsov, "Synagogue Architecture in Lithuania," in Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, ed., *Synagogues in Lithuania: A Catalogue* (Vilnius, Lithuania, 2010), 43–72, and Tobias Lamey, "Zur Genese der 'Stütz-Bimah' im frühneuzeitlichen polnischen Synagogenbau am Beispiel der Synagoge in Przemyśl" (diss., Fachgebiet Baugeschichte des Instituts für Bau- und Stadtbaugeschichte, Fakultät Architektur, Bauingenieurwesen und Umweltwissenschaften, Universität Braunschweig, 2007).

[13] Richard D. Barnett, *The Synagogue of Bevis Marks* (Oxford, 1960) is still the classic work on Bevis Marks, supplemented by the more recent Sharman Kadish, *Bevis Marks Synagogue: A Short History of the Building and an Appreciation of its Architecture* (London, 2001).

[14] See Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe*, esp. 21–34 .

[15] Kravtsov, "Synagogue Architecture," 44.

This practice and its justification speak to the fact that, in early modern synagogue architecture, formal parallels with the architecture of the larger society and practical considerations existed side by side with symbolic content in an easy confluence. In the sixteenth century, one finds examples of fortress synagogues in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, designed to resist invasions from the east by Ottomans, Russians, and Walachians.[16] Though fortification was clearly deemed a necessity and there were architectural parallels in fortified churches, the symbolic valence of a fortified stone synagogue – simultaneously defensive and defiant – may also say something about the particular mentalities of Jews in this place and period. Similarly, the less militarily defensible but more phantasmagorically decorated wooden synagogues of Poland/Ukraine, with their carpet-like interiors replicating the feeling of the Ottoman tent, have their own complex and more mystical/poetic symbolic language. Just as the fortress-style synagogues are architecturally comparable to fortified churches, the wooden synagogue styles paralleled (and exceeded in the elaboration of their interior design) the jointed wooden churches of the region.[17]

Printed books are an important artistic context for Jews in the early modern period. A variety of type-forms develop, particularly in Italy and Amsterdam, some growing out of Christian Hebraist interest, others pioneered by the Jews themselves. These imitate the various types of manuscript handwriting, from square script to rabbinical hands, striving at the same time for balance and uniformity. It is in the early modern period that the configuration of Jewish printed books – all the paratextual elements that Jews eventually come to regard as *sine qua nons* of "Jewish" books, referred to as *tsurat ha-daf* ("the configuration of the page") – came into being, in many cases through the invention of non-Jewish printers. Illustrations – woodcut or engraved – borrowed from the wider printerly repertoire were Judaized in various ways, either by means of captions or by actual alteration to the plates themselves.[18] This forms an interesting parallel to a phenomenon that had been going on since Hellenistic Judaism, and certainly throughout the medieval period, wherein the formal and stylistic structure of distinctly non-Jewish literatures were adopted

[16] Ibid., 41–74.

[17] Rachel Wischnitzer, *The Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia, 1964), 125–47; Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe*, 53–8, and individual town sections; Maria Piechotka and Kazimierz Piechotka, *Heaven's Gate: Wooden Synagogues in the Territory of the Former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth* (Warsaw, 2004); Thomas C. Hubka, *Resplendent Synagogue: Architecture and Worship in an Eighteenth-Century Polish Community* (Hanover, NH, 2003).

[18] The best comprehensive survey is still Haviva Peled-Carmeli, *Illustrated Haggadot of the Eighteenth Century* (Jerusalem, 1983).

and adapted by Jews – for instance, in a Hebrew Arthurian romance, a joust held at Pentecost in the original Christian text became one held at *Shavu'ot* time in the Jewish text. The title pages of Jewish books were generally chosen from among templates available to both Jewish and non-Jewish printers, but they promoted a particular esthetic that would become part of the Jewish symbolic universe. It stands to reason, for instance, that an element like a pair of columns flanking the title of a book, forming as they do a "gateway" through which the reader must enter in order to access the wisdom of the work in question was as susceptible to reading and interpretation as any text within that book. Accordingly, it was in this period that such elements as the *sha'ar* ("gateway"), architectural, columned, or flanked by biblical figures – Adam and Eve, Moses and Aaron, etc. – developed as immediately recognizable "Jewish" motifs, even to the extent of being ascribed with symbolic, and in some cases mystical, significance.[19]

In the synagogue, as well as in the home, there was an efflorescence of a variety of esthetically embellished ritual objects. It is difficult, due to the aforementioned dearth of medieval examples of such objects, to say whether the creation of them is actually new to the early modern period. When, for instance, do Jews of a certain class stop using simple silver cups for *kiddush* (the prayer over wine sanctifying Sabbaths and holidays) and begin using cups designed – or at least elaborately decorated and inscribed – for the particular purpose of *kiddush*? When do they stop simply lining up clay or glass vessels on windowsills to form a *Ḥanukah* lamp and start commissioning integral *Ḥanukah* lamps in bronze or in silver? In the early modern period, for instance, spice boxes begin to resemble city towers,[20] Torah finials are constructed in the form of specific church spires familiar to the denizens of particular towns, and the backplates of *Ḥanukah* lamps are made of the same elements which – with their Tritons, mermaids and seahorses, harpies, Pegasi, and putti – were used in the wider cultural sphere to frame mirrors.[21] Jewish religious objects that evoke a particular skyscape, or echo the religious architecture of a different faith, or incorporate elements from a distinctly Hellenistic mythology to celebrate a holiday ostensibly commemorating the victory of Judaism over Hellenism may

[19] See, for example, the title page with imaginary portraits of Moses and Aaron in the *haggadah* written and illustrated by Uri Feibusch ben Yiẓḥak Eisik Segal ("The Copenhagen Haggadah") (Hamburg/Altona, 1739), Copenhagen, Royal Library, MS M.T. 104, fol. 1r.

[20] Marilyn G. Koolik and Judy Levy, *Towers of Spice: The Tower-Shaped Tradition in Havdalah Spiceboxes* (Jerusalem, 1982).

[21] Iris Fishof, *Ma'alin be-Kodesh: Shimush Shani be-Omanut Yehudit / From the Secular to the Sacred: Everyday Objects in Jewish Ritual Use* (Jerusalem, 1985).

seem jarring and strange to us, but they were part of the fusion of cultural valences that was distinctive to Jewish early modernity. Each of these objects placed its user squarely within the stylistic and cultural context of her or his historical moment, proclaiming that Jew's membership in an esthetic community that stretched beyond the constituency of Jews into the realm of the stylish, the *au courant*, the culture of luxury goods and fine living accessible to people of means regardless of religious commitments.

Elaborately decorated objects could also have political significance, though such significance could cut in more than one direction. A Polish brass or silver *Ḥanukah* lamp from the reign of Maria Theresa, ornamented with the double-headed eagle of the Holy Roman Empire, could serve to project an image of loyalty to the Empress. At least, that is what would be seen from "outside the house" where such a lamp was lit. At the same time, the use of such a lamp in a ceremony traditionally commemorating the Jewish overthrow of religious and cultural tyranny, and the singing before it of a liturgical poem (*Ma'oz Tsur*) that hymns the overthrow of "the evil nation" (understood by early modern Jews to mean the political dominance of the Christian Empire) would certainly invite another reading of this object from "inside the house": the desire for the overthrow of a regime that was calculatedly cruel and oppressive to Jews.[22] Yet, these two very different readings of the object are deliberately juxtaposed and are not, in essence, contradictory. Jews did see themselves as loyal citizens of the Holy Roman Empire, and behaved accordingly. At the same time, they hungered for justice and equity. Like disenfranchised and underrepresented populations in America, they felt a strong degree of anger at the inequities of their lot, but still felt that the system, at least theoretically and idealistically, had the potential to be a good one, and that, moreover, this inequitable and sometimes inhospitable country remained their country, for all its faults. The Holy Roman imperial eagle is used on *Ḥanukah* lamps in the same manner in which the American eagle is used in mural painting in ghettos and *barrios* all over the American landscape – to betoken an ambivalent patriotism, with all the very complicated associations characteristic of such a mixed understanding of the minority position in society, whether that "minority" status is a product of actual demographics or of representation. It is important that the location for the lighting of such *Ḥanukah* lamps was the home. *Ḥanukah* lamps for synagogue use were larger and tended to resemble the lampstand of the Temple in Jerusalem (substituting the eight

[22] Maria Theresa, of course, referred to the Jews as a "troublesome plague within the State," and expelled them from Prague in 1744. She planned further expulsions from Bohemia and Moravia, but these were never carried out. See Marc Saperstein, *"Your Voice like a Ram's Horn": Themes and Texts in Traditional Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati, 1996), 447.

branches prescribed for the celebration of *Ḥanukah* for the Temple lampstand's seven). In some cases, *Ḥanukah* lamps made for synagogues might include a very small central finial depicting the eagle of Empire, but for the most part, examples of lamps in which this motif was dominant rather than peripheral were designed to be set on the windowsills of private homes. This situated the home as the primary site of the playing-out of the political ambivalence I have adumbrated.[23]

At the same time as political ambivalence was played out in the early modern Jewish home, that venue was equally a site of clarification, of *less* ambivalence with regard to other identity issues. Jews became more and more "at home," as it were, with art. As a middle or merchant class developed, so also did the middle-class home become the site of figurative art, a form hitherto relegated to illuminated books and manuscripts owned by the very wealthy. Although there are scattered references in various medieval sources to what seem to be frescos painted in Jewish homes,[24] it is only in the seventeenth century that we begin to see (or to read about, since not many survive) free-hanging paintings displayed on walls in the homes of "middle-class" Jews.[25] As might be expected, given their origin in manuscript illumination and in emulation of the household art of the wider culture, these paintings usually depicted biblical and religious subjects, either framing texts or independent of them. But this period also sees the first Jewish ventures into the creation of portraits of individuals – members of the family or prominent rabbinic figures. It is not without significance that early modernity, an era of increasing Jewish

[23] In order to form a picture of the conscious relationship of Jews in early modernity with the governments under which they lived, and of the tensions between public discourse and private sentiments, one might read, for example, Adam Teller, "Jewish Literary Responses to the Events of 1648–1649 and the Creation of a Polish-Jewish Consciousness," in B. Nathans and G. Safran, eds., *Culture Front: Eastern European Jews and their Culture* (Philadelphia, 2008), 17–45, in parallel with the sermons of Israel ben Benjamin of Belżyce and (later) Ezekiel Landau in Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching, 1200–1800: An Anthology* (New Haven, 1989), 286–301, 359–75.

[24] See Rashi on BT *Shabbat* 149a: "An inscription that runs under the form and the images, such as when people paint various animals or images of heroic people, like the battle of David and Goliath, and inscribe below it, 'This is the image of such and such an animal' or 'this is the image of such a man or such a woman.'" Wall-paintings have been found on the sites of medieval Jewish homes. On the find in Zurich, see Dölf Wild and Roland Böhmer, "Die spätmittelalterlichen Wandmalereien im Haus 'Zum Brunnenhof' in Zürich und ihre jüdischen Auftraggeber," *Zürcher Denkmalpflege* (Stadt Zürich) (1995/6), 15–33.

[25] Of course, it was the upper classes who could best afford to memorialize (or idealize) their household interiors, so the visual evidence comes primarily from them, but one can assume that middle-class Jews of the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries displayed less luxurious art in their homes, just as middle-class non-Jews purchased and displayed penny prints while their richer peers purchased and displayed fine paintings. (See, above, n. 10.)

self-awareness, is also the locus of the burgeoning self-consciousness of portraiture. This new and quite literal way of "putting oneself in the picture" recalls more generalized medieval attempts to view the experiences of Jewish history through the lens of the present. But it also echoes the distinctly new practice of valorizing Moses and Esther. The creation of rabbinic likenesses (with the attendant justification that "your eyes [should] see your teacher" [Isaiah 30:20]), and, most strikingly, of family portraiture, emphasizes that quintessentially early modern sense of self-conscious self-valuation. It says, effectively, *Hineini* ("Here I am"). This seemingly simple statement in reality demands a triple self-consciousness: it requires a sense of situation in a historical context ("here"), a sense of self as individual ("I"), and an awareness of the force that the individual being can exert on the historical context by virtue of her or his existence within it ("am").[26]

Given the power of this self-assertion via the commissioning by Jews of portraiture, if we could be invisibly present to examine the furnishings of the room in which, say, an upper-middle-class woman like Glückel of Hameln – with the self-awareness, the literacy, and the motivation to pen her memoirs – did her writing, it would come as no surprise, then, to find, alongside her purpose-designed Sabbath candlesticks, *kiddush* cups, and *Ḥanukah* lamp, an image of a biblical scene – David kneeling before Samuel as he is anointed King of Israel, and a portrait or portraits of her beloved husband or other family members.[27]

Such paintings and portraits were the intermediate steps in the direction of the involvement of Jews in the commission, and eventually in the creation, of "secular" or "fine" art. It is a huge jump from the use of art in a strictly liturgical context to its employment in a secular context, yet, as I hope I have demonstrated, conditions in the early modern period conspired to make this not only possible but relatively easy. It is a much smaller step from the painting of free-hanging paintings and portraits to involvement in the creation of fine arts. Accordingly, besides their inherent importance in the cultural context of early modern Europe, the new purposes to which visual culture was put by Jews in this period and the questions they raise – in terms of politics, esthetics, and identity – are essential to the development of the fine arts in the modern period, a development in which Jews would play an indisputably prominent role.[28]

[26] Cohen, *Jewish Icons*, esp. 186–219.

[27] *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*, trans. Marvin Lowenthal (New York, 1977); Natalie Zemon Davis, "Riches and Dangers: Glikl bas Judah Leib on Court Jews," in Mann *et al.*, eds., *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds*, 45–57.

[28] Richard I. Cohen and Susan Tumarkin Goodman, *The Emergence of Jewish Artists in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Merrell, NY, 2001).

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CHAPTER 27

MUSICAL DILEMMAS OF EARLY MODERN JEWS

EDWIN SEROUSSI

INTRODUCTION

The ontology of the modern concept of music that still dominates musicology was framed by European aristocratic, and later on bourgeois, discourses concerning the economy of sounds, from the Enlightenment onwards. Concepts such as "absolute" music, i.e. non-referential instrumental music, as a high esthetic ideal, the redemptive power of music, and the promethean genius of the individual musician are constructs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Any discussion of music preceding modernity, certainly outside Europe, has to consider alternative perceptions of the uses and meanings of non-verbal patterned sound (henceforth "music") by humans. Magic, therapy, medicine, weaponry, rhetoric, synesthesia, and body movement were related in one way or another to music-making before modernity. These relations continued to be pervasive in the modern period, albeit concealed by rationalist discourses that privilege concepts such as the autonomy of art music from immediate social or political concerns, and the creative freedom of the individual musician. Yet modern music therapy and the contemporary uses of music as torture confirm the ubiquitous links between music and social needs – such as healing – or malaises – such as violence.

Pre-modern music was thoroughly related to and dependent on its performative contexts, such as rituals, warfare, theatres, dance halls, etc., to an extent that surpasses modern music's indispensable dependence on context. Musical rituals were not circumscribed to formalized religious events (i.e. liturgies). Instrumental music or language set to music (mostly sung poetry) were part of sanctioned public displays of social order, such as state ceremonies, courtship, weddings, processions of guilds, poets' contests, or the study/memorization of texts, sacred or secular. With this view of the pre-modern economy of sounds in mind, we shall discuss selected aspects of music in early modern Jewish contexts while avoiding projections of modern concepts of music onto the past, especially racialized

categories, such as "Jewish music," that are tinted by post-Wagnerian discourses. It cannot be denied that music could denote ethnicity in early modernity,[1] but such denotation was not rooted in biological reductionism or its concealed offspring, nationalism, as happened in the modern period.

The economic and demographic restructuring of the Jewish communities in Europe and the Ottoman Empire in early modernity generated new relations with the non-Jewish world, as well as shifts in Jewish self-consciousness and artistic creativity that are expressed in musical practices. Early modern Jews engaged in new musical practices in their internal social circuits and engaged more openly in music-making or consumption in non-Jewish contexts. However, generalizations about these activities throughout the early modern Jewish map can lead to unwarranted reductionism. One must consider the locality of each musical practice and the role of human agency in the making of musical "traditions." In this context, the distinction between Jews in Christendom and those in the lands of Islam is pertinent to the specificities of the musical cultures of Jews in early modernity.

From a modern European perspective, the hallmark of "music" has been its literacy, its correlation to evolving techniques of musical notation, and its status as occupying an elitist domain (Church, courts, and the aristocracy). Thus, in terms of music, most Jews belonged to the musically illiterate stratum, by virtue of their position within European society prior to the late eighteenth century and as a consequence of their own choice. This is neither a value judgment nor meant to imply that European Jews did not practice any form of "valuable" music. It only means that the production, context of performance, evaluation, and transmission of music differed from those of the Christian elites and was closer to that of the masses. Open markets, dance halls, and cafés were, depending on time and place, venues of musical contacts between Jews and non-Jews. As we shall see, exceptions to this rule are remarkably few.

In the lands of Islam, music developed under different circumstances because oral transmission (with rare exceptions in the Ottoman court) was the norm for all registers of musical production. Jewish musicians under Islam had proportionately more access to non-Jewish elitist venues, such as rulers' courts or Sufi lodges. They consequently shared musical repertoires with Muslim elites in keeping with their submissive position as providers of musical entertainment for the ruling classes. Even on a less elitist level, the number of Jewish instrumentalists in the lands of Islam was relatively high

[1] See Eleazar Gutwirth, "Music, Identity, and the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain," *Early Music History* 17 (1998), 161–81.

in comparison to their overall number in each location, due partly to the contempt that Islamic jurisprudence professed toward playing musical instruments.

How did the music of early modern Jewry sound? One can *a priori* argue for continuity in the chain of oral transmission and suggest that what one hears today in extant Jewish soundscapes, most especially in traditional synagogues, carries traces of earlier practices. The risk of this assumption, however, lies in modern readings of tradition as a tenacious lore, a tenet for which the musical evidence is, at best, scarce. Oral musical utterances change over time, slowly or in abrupt shifts. Each performance of the same "piece," such as a wedding song, even by the same performer, is unique. Yet one may claim continuities at deeper levels in the sound structure of all the performances of that same wedding song. Thus, while each performance of the "piece" is decidedly unique in terms of time and place, all its performances over time and in extended areas may share a basic melodic movement or maintain a fixed relation between the melody and the words. Tradition may reside then in the willingness of members of a community (musicians and their judging audiences) to sustain those deep structures over extended periods in spite of individual and temporal variability.

The extent to which an awareness of a "Jewish musical tradition" existed or was an issue in the early modern period can be gleaned from texts addressing music. The scant number of such texts, their brevity and wide geographical distribution defy general conclusions. Early modern texts in Hebrew or Jewish languages treat music on different discursive levels, ranging from a highly speculative and symbolic one to references to actual musical practices or their practitioners and their social regulations. Rabbinical responsa defined boundaries of admissible musical production and consumption, often relying on earlier rulings, as in the case of Sephardic authorities profusely quoting Maimonides' views on music.[2] In the Ashkenazic sphere, specific liturgical music practices were sanctioned by (or attributed to) rabbinical authority, as in the case of Jacob ben Moses Halevy Möllin (*c.* 1360–1427), a.k.a. the Maharil.[3] Musical terminology also appears in prayer books and collections of *piyyutim* ("liturgical

[2] See the translation and commentary by Boaz Cohen, "The Responsum of Maimonides Concerning Music," *Jewish Music Journal* 2, 2 (1935), 1–7; repr. in Boaz Cohen, *Law and Tradition in Judaism* (New York, 1959), 167–81. For a summary of the extensive literature on Maimonides' ruling on music, see Edwin Seroussi, "More on Maimonides on Music," *Zutot* (Amsterdam) 2 (2003), 126–35.

[3] For the most recent edition of this source, see *Sefer Maharil: Minhagim*, ed. Sh. Spitzer (Jerusalem, 1989). For an English translation of selected passages of musical relevance, see David J. Berger, "Rabbi Jacob Molin (the Maharil) and a Translation of and Commentary on Selected Chapters from *Sefer Maharil*" (MA thesis, New York, 2007).

poems") to guide the performers. This variety of texts stemming from rabbinical and elite sources addressed soundscapes pertinent to their writers' immediate contexts.

An example of this type of text is the tractate *Sefer Tuv Ta'am* (Venice, 1539) by the grammarian Eliyahu Bakhur (1469–1549). A passage from this treatise on the *te'amim* ("masoretic accents") shows the author's awareness of the multi-ethnic Jewish musical milieu of early modern Venice:

> The reading [of the Torah] of the Sephardim and the *Loʿazim* [the autochthonous Italian Jews] [is unique in that] they do not sing (*menaggnim*) anything other than the important *melakhim* ["Kings," the main stopping accents] and perhaps some others such as *zarqah, pazer, gershayim*, and *tlisha* and the like. But they sing almost all the *meshartim* ["Serfs," the subsidiary accents that connect between the stops] with one [and the same] melody unlike us the Ashkenazim who do read each accent, whether a "King" or a "Serf," with its unique melody. And all the melodies of the [Ashkenazic] *teʿamim* were already printed by the Gentiles in accordance with the science of song (*ḥokhmat hashir*) that is called *musika* and whoever knows the science of song is able to sing them as we do, without any mistake.[4]

Clear sonic distinctions emerge from this passage between Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Italian Jews. This awareness of difference as expressed in music appears in Renaissance Italy when Jews of diverse provenances settled in close physical proximity. But also the contemporary dialogue between Jewish scholars and Christian Hebraists of the Renaissance surfaces from this text. Bakhur refers to the musical transcriptions of the Ashkenazic (German) biblical cantillation by Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), in his treatise *De accentibus, et orthographia linguae hebraicae* (Haguenau, 1518). For Reuchlin, the (Ashkenazic) performance that he listened to represented the recitation of the Bible by the entire "Jewish nation" rather than the discrete subculture of his individual Judeo-German informant. On the other hand, Bakhur is cognisant of the power of the new technology of printed musical notation to represent his musical tradition and to enable its decoding with a remarkable consistency that is lacking in oral transmission. This passage shows, then, how, at least in early sixteenth-century Venice, musical practices were a marker of internal Jewish ethnic difference. At the same time, it underscores the interest of gentile savants in "Jewish music"; for them, the music of one Jew could be a specimen representing the sound of the entire Jewish nation.

References to musical performances in the realm of women, for example, are very rare and usually reflect critical reactions to infringements of

[4] Eliyahu Bakhur, *Sefer Tuv Ta'am* (Venice, 1539), 7.

the norms of segregation by male writers. A classic passage by Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas will suffice to illustrate this type of text:

> Religious songs inspire the communion with God, but the songs that women sing, with their frivolous lyrics and dirty language, cause the separation between soul and body and even if [the lyrics] do not use corrupted words, all these are lyrics without substance, and people of low stature are attracted by the lyrics of these cheap songs, and they lose their soul, and about them the prophet said: "Spare Me the sound of your hymns, and let Me not hear the music of your lutes" [Amos 5:23].[5]

This passage by De Vidas documents inter alia the vitality of the Judeo-Spanish song among sixteenth-century Sephardic women in Ottoman Palestine. Although we cannot know precisely which songs were performed or who the performers were, the text undoubtedly conveys the vital presence, and apparent threat to social order, of the women's song repertoire in the society inhabited by the writer.

Other literary sources for early modern Jewish soundscapes are the ones written by outsiders, such as Inquisition records or censors' reports. While stereotypes and anti-Jewish sentiments tinted such texts, one can extrapolate from them valuable "ethnographic" perceptions. An often-quoted source of this type is the history of the German Jews by the Christian historian Johann Jacob Schudt (1664–1772).[6] Schudt's overt prejudice against the subjects of his ethnographic enquiry is clear. Yet, his vivid descriptions of itinerant *leytsim* ("Jewish instrumentalists") – or *klezmorim* as they are usually known nowadays – Jewish weddings, and scenes from the resorts where the elites of German and Bohemian Jews spent their summers provide an invaluable glimpse into the musical life of central European Jews at the turn of the eighteenth century. Jewish sources seldom provide such intimate descriptions of the musical scenes of daily life.[7]

[5] *Reshit Hokma* [Venice, 1579], ed. Y. H. Waldman (Jerusalem, 1984), ch. 10, p. 589, no. 35.

[6] Johann Jacob Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten, vorstellende was sich curieuses und denckwürdiges in den neuern Zeiten bey einigen Jahr-hunderten mit denen in alle IV. Theile der Welt, sonderlich durch Teutschland, zerstreuten Juden zugetragen: samt einer vollständigen Franckfurter Juden-Chronick, darinnen der zu Franckfurt am Mayn wohnenden Juden, von einigen Jahr-hunderten, biss auff unsere Zeiten, merckwürdigste Begebenheiten enthalten. Benebst einigen, zur Erläuterung beygefügten Kupffern und Figuren*, 4 vols. (Frankfurt, 1714 [vols. I–III] – 1718 [vol. IV]).

[7] The contribution of Christian Hebraists to a Jewish ethnography of the past, including a musical one, is still understudied. See the pioneer mapping of this field in Yaacov Deutsch and Avi Aronsky, *Judaism in Christian Eyes: Ethnographic Descriptions of Jews and Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 2011). A detailed study of *klezmorim* that benefits from such sources is Walter Salmen, *" – denn die Fiedel macht das Fest": Jüdische Musikanten und Tänzer vom 13. bis 20. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck, 1991).

An extremely fractured picture of music in early modern Jewish communities therefore emerges from the exclusively oral transmission of the Jewish soundscape. Put differently, information about music of the Jews in the past is literary and (to a lesser extent) iconographic, not musical. Thus, early modern Jewish print culture had not the same profound effect on music as it had on other spheres of Jewish culture.

A final introductory remark concerns the sacred/secular binary opposition regarding music in the early modern period. Early modern Jewish communities assumedly marked their status as self-sufficient religious corporations by maintaining a soundscape of their own within their synagogues and homes. Precisely because many historians perceive the crumbling of walls separating Jewish and non-Jewish spheres of music as a harbinger of modernity, we should question the assumption of Jewish musical exclusivity in earlier periods. To be sure, openness of Jewish musical spaces to the music of the non-Jewish surroundings goes back to Antiquity. We can only argue, therefore, that in early modernity the awareness and intentionality of musical openness to the non-Jewish surroundings are more explicit and intense than before. The "danger" of indulging in the soundscape of the Other thus becomes another layer in the weakening of traditional Jewish authority and social structures. The overt discomfort of religious Jewish authorities in southeast Europe regarding the boundary-crossing *klezmorim* is a clear antecedent of this anxiety. Similarly, perceiving the performance of the Jewish liturgy as susceptible to "high art" musical considerations and esthetic sensibilities, parallel to those expressed by the increasing opulence in synagogue architecture, can likewise be gleaned as a marker of early modernity. All these processes were very gradual and context-sensitive, i.e. they varied greatly in diverse periods and geographical locations.

As a "secular" space of bourgeois music-making developed in the cities of the emerging late eighteenth-century European national states and the Russian Empire (and a century later in the lands of Islam on the wings of European colonialism), Jews found in the practice of music outside their communities or guilds a fertile arena to access more accommodating, non-religious spaces. In these new spaces, they could practice and develop their craft with unprecedented freedom. Such processes, however, are beyond the scope of this article, and thus the modern sacred/secular conundrum will not be addressed here.[8]

[8] For in-depth elaborations on this topic, see Ezra Mendelsohn, "On the Jewish Presence in Nineteenth-Century European Musical Life," in *Modern Jews and their Musical Agendas*, Studies in Contemporary Jewry, 9 (New York, 1993), 3–16; James Loeffler, *The Most Musical of All Nations: Jews, Culture, and Modernity in the Late Russian Empire* (New Haven, 2012).

CASE STUDIES

NORTHEASTERN ITALY

Since the beginnings of Jewish music studies in the late nineteenth century, the *locus classicus* of early Jewish musical modernity has been Renaissance Italy. However, such a broad historical and geographical unit is too vague. In reality, what concerned musicologists and historians who saw in Renaissance Italy the harbinger of the Jewish "musical return" to history are the works of a small circle of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century musicians from *Italiani* Jewish families (and some Spanish *conversos*) in the Mantua–Modena–Venice triangle. Most of these musicians engaged in other professions, such as the rabbinate or moneylending. The summit of this process was the publication of *Hashirim Asher li-Shlomo* (Venice, 1623), a collection of thirty-two polyphonic Hebrew compositions by Salamone Rossi "Ebreo." Jewish musicology has held this collection in great esteem since its first modern edition appeared in Paris in 1877, edited by the German cantor and composer Samuel Naumbourg (1815–80), a central figure in the Jewish musical life of Paris throughout most of the nineteenth century. Naumbourg's edition, a truly modernist enterprise, unleashed an unprecedented interest in Rossi, the great Italian Jewish composer of the Renaissance. Rossi became an icon as the first professional Jewish musician to succeed in crossing the barriers separating musicians of Jewish descent from the gentile music scene without compromising his ethno-religious identity.

However, beyond Rossi's achievements, other Italian Jewish intellectuals from the Renaissance contributed to the creation of the aura of deep Jewish involvement in musical life. Contemporary discourses about the powers and origins of music occupied Italian Jewish savants of that period, such as Yokhanan Alemanno, David ben Yehuda Messer Leon, Judah Moscato, his student Abraham Portaleone, and particularly Leone da Modena (who probably composed music too). References to current musical practices in their writings not only were the result of internal shifts in their perception of music but also reflected broader concerns about music in the non-Jewish society, including the interest of non-Jews in the music of the Jews. Interest in "ancient wisdom" regarding the powers of music (a Jewish "science" that was "stolen" by the Christians, a thought already echoed by Immanuel ha-Romi in the fourteenth century) and its contemporary applications reflected a shift from speculative medieval concerns to the early modern ethnographic interest in and practices of contemporary music. This issue was also tied to theories about the origins of this occult musical knowledge (Ancient Greeks vs. Ancient Hebrews), and to the notion held by the Italian Jewish elite that Judaism had now lost

its former leadership in the sciences (to which *ḥokhmat ha-musiqa* ["musicology"] belonged). These intellectual concerns were symptomatic of the wider access of Italian Jewish elites to venues where art music was performed in the cities – namely, among the aristocracy and in the Church.

One also cannot rule out the possibility that ideas about the theurgic and magical powers of music inferred from kabbalistic texts comprised part of the backdrop against which both Jewish and Christian intellectuals in Italy discussed these subjects. The shift in Italy from developed polyphonic styles in the sixteenth century to monody and opera in the seventeenth was tied to such changes in the perceptions of the powers of music. In such a context, Rossi's remarkable Hebrew opus can be read as an innovation, as well as (from his standpoint) a restoration of ancient Templar musical splendor achieved by moving "back," as it were, from an impoverished (and extemporized) traditional Jewish monophony to an elaborated, composed polyphony.

Although unprecedented in their scope, these musical exchanges between Jewish elites and their Christian surroundings in northeastern Italy were local and short-lived. Indeed, the music profession among Jews in northern Italian cities flourished in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. However, synagogue liturgy in Italy continued to be performed, as a rule, according to traditional patterns of sound. To the ears of non-Jewish visitors, such as the English traveler Thomas Coryate (*c.* 1577–1617), who attended Sabbath services at a Venetian synagogue (apparently the Levantine one) in 1608, the Torah was not read "by a sober, distinctive, and orderly reading but by an exceeding loud yaling [*sic*], undecent roaring, and as it were a beastly bellowing of it forth."[9] A century later, the patrician Christian composer Benedetto Marcelo (1686–1739) documented in the same Venetian synagogues melodies that served him as inspiration for some psalm-settings in his *Estro poetico-armonico* (1724–7). His rationale was that traces of musical "antiquity" were embedded in the liturgical practices of contemporary Jews. Thus, early modern Christian perceptions of Jewish musical otherness in Italy ranged from sonic repulsion to a more appreciative "antiquarianism."

The repercussions of this early modern Jewish musical renaissance in northern Italy were, in spite of their uniqueness, limited. Synagogue services in northeast Italy and elsewhere in the Peninsula continued to be

[9] Thomas Coryate and George Coryate, *Coryate's crudities hastily gobled up in five months travels in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia commonly called the Grisons country, Helvetia alias Switzerland, some parts of high Germany and the Netherlands; newly digested in the hungry aire of Odcombe in the county of Somerset, and now dispersed to the nourishment of the travelling members of this kingdome* (Glasgow, 1905 [1611]), I, 371.

conducted according to the orally transmitted traditions until the twentieth century. Yet modern Jewish musicological discourses have elevated this fascinating chapter to the status of harbinger of Jewish musical modernity. A less tautological approach may yield a more restrained evaluation of the impact that these musical developments among Jews in early modern Italy exerted on the music of European Jews in later periods.

GERMANY

Parallel to the Judeo-Christian musical encounters in Italy were the remarkable explorations by German-speaking Christian Hebraists of the reading of the Torah by Jews as a component of their "scientific" approach to the Hebrew Bible. We have already mentioned the launching of a new methodology in the study of Hebrew scriptural reading, the most sacred space of the Jewish soundscape, by the Christian Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin. His study demanded some "ethnographical encounters," i.e. face-to-face exchanges between Jewish tradition-bearers (rabbis, cantors) and their Christian counterparts. The pervasive modern Ashkenazic perception of Torah cantillation as a musical rather than a reading system, with a rationalized one-to-one correspondence between accent and musical motif, may be rooted in this Christian Hebraist project.

Early modern interfaith musical dialogues in German territories also reached Jewish homes and synagogues. References to Jewish women from well-to-do families playing keyboard instruments at their homes in seventeenth-century Germany are not rare, as in the case of Glückel von Hameln's stepsister.[10] Such an exposure to contemporary bourgeois music in the private Jewish sphere developed in German Jewish ears a sensibility for musical styles that slowly leaked into the space of the liturgy. Tensions arose in response to the spirit of musical openness of some western and central European seventeenth-century cantors who integrated "contemporary" music in the services at the expense of the "old" established liturgical music practices of Ashkenaz. Judah Leib Minden Zelichower (*c.* 1640–1711), a cantor from western Poland active in Hamburg and Altona, admonished his contemporary cantors in western Europe who attempted to please their audiences with melodies adopted from dance halls, opera houses, or street singers while abandoning the traditional liturgical modes because they were "outdated." Judah's unusually harsh language and moralistic severity is also directed against the congregations who prefer to choose cantors because

[10] *Glikl: Memoires 1691–1791*, ed. and trans. from Yiddish by Chava Turniansky (Jerusalem, 2006), 72–3.

of their musical abilities rather than their religious devotion and ability to understand the texts they perform.[11]

Within one generation or so, the conservative criticism of cantors in western Europe who engaged in non-Jewish music, such as that of Judah Leib Minden Zelichower, started to be replaced by a different charge, one leveled against *hazzanim* for their ignorance of the art of music. In the ethical treatise for cantors *cum* autobiography that comprises the first and main section of his *Teʿudat Shlomo* (Offenbach, 1718), the *hazzan* Salomon ben Moses Lipschitz (c. 1675 – after 1718) admonishes his contemporary colleagues on various accounts, providing a vivid picture of the transition of synagogue music in central Europe from medieval to the early modern and modern patterns of performance.

As an itinerant cantor characteristic of his time, Lipschitz amassed a rich palette of experiences in synagogues of many types (rural and urban), which he summarized in his treatise. Born in Fürth, Lipschitz studied at the *yeshiva* of Rabbi David Oppenheim in Nikolsburg, was cantor, *shoḥeṭ*, and teacher in Wallerstein, moved to Pfersee (today Ausburg in Bavaria), and thereafter settled in Prague, where he became chief cantor at the Pinkas and Zigeuner synagogues. In 1706, he retired to Frankfurt am Main, but later on accepted the position of cantor in Metz, where he died. Although Lipschitz's treatise is similar in content to Zelichover's text discussed above, one major difference has to do with the access the author of *Teʿudat Shlomo* had to the magnificent library of David Oppenheimer in Nikolsburg. Lipschitz chastised cantors for abandoning the traditional musical modes of the Ashkenazic liturgy and indulging in unnecessary musical extensions of the liturgy through the unscrupulous adaptation of the lowest stratum of gentile music. This phenomenon is one result of the social stratification and professionalization that started to affect the cantorial world at the time. An elite of "star" cantors (called in the vernacular, according to Lipschitz, *oyber ḥazzanim*) who were assisted by two or three deputies, called *meshorerim*, took over the important synagogues built in central European cities such as Prague where Jews were allowed to settle. These cantors officiated only on Holy Days and Sabbaths, delegating to their deputies most of their daily tasks. On the other hand, rural cantors who fulfilled other community duties as well were known for their lack of decorum in their dressing, and faulty hygiene. He even accuses cantors of not praying or studying on a daily basis and being unable to read the Torah in public unless a member of the congregation stands next to them and whispers the proper intonations. Greediness, bad-mouthing, and short-sightedness affecting the cantorial world of the time also emerge from Lipschitz's fulminant text. All this information amounts to a scene in which cantorial

[11] *Sefer Shirei Yehudah* (Amsterdam, 1696), fols. 25b–26b.

music and its performers seem to be turning, by the late seventeenth century, into an early modern "market." In this market, supply and demand count, prestige and fame are maintained via extravagant performances, and public opinion is manipulated through gossiping and mutual critique.

Furthermore, Lipschitz complains about the low level of the cantors' performances, which derives in his view from their ignorance of the rules of music. Making music without knowing its rules, maintains Lipschitz, is like praying without intention (*kavanah*). He supports these claims by quoting verbatim from the Italian Jewish writings we have discussed in the previous paragraphs. Above all, he reproduces word for word all the introductory texts to the 1623 Venice edition of Salamone Rossi's *Hashirim Asher li-Shlomo* (a copy of which David Oppenheimer possessed) which he calls the "old book" (*sefer yashan; Teʿudat Shlomo*, fols. 16a–19a). At the heart of this selection of rabbinical texts is the famous 1605 responsum of Rabbi Leone da Modena on the question of polyphony in the synagogue. Lipschitz also quotes from the sermon on *ḥokhmat hamusiqah* ("science of music") included in Judah Arieh Moscato's *Nefutsot Yehudah*, a key Hebrew text in praise of the musical beautification of ritual from the Italian Renaissance. In conclusion, more than a century prior to the formal musical modernization of the Jewish liturgy in western and central Europe, Lipschitz heralded its main markers, using – among others – Italian rabbinical sources. These features include the regulation of the musical performance of the Jewish liturgy according to the rules of gentile "High Art," even when its traditional components were to be maintained – the praise of decorum and restraint by the performers, and the total commitment of the Jewish community to the full-time engagement of professionally trained cantors and choristers.

PORTUGUESE JEWS IN AMSTERDAM

The Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam, whose musical life in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is well documented, presents yet another specific case of early Jewish musical modernity. The parameters of this modernity are similar to those promoted by Lipschitz. Yet, in evaluating this music, one has to consider again the particular circumstances surrounding its creation. The esthetic sensibilities of the heirs of the Iberian *conversos* entrenched in the burgeoning musical life of Amsterdam (and, to a lesser extent, of London, Hamburg, and southern France) led them to commission original compositions in Hebrew for the synagogue in the contemporary European musical styles of secular salon music and, more rarely, Protestant church music. For these Jews, who

entertained Christian guests and musicians in their salons, such a commission was a natural step.

While these musical activities could be seen as "early modern," one has to consider that vocal and instrumental pieces composed for the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam (some are preserved in musical manuscripts) were commissioned for special occasions, such as the commemoration of the foundation of Amsterdam's great synagogue in 1675, or Jewish festivals in which instrumental music was allowed. For Sabbaths and holidays, however, the cantors were expected to compose original music for selected prayers only (such as *Barekhu, Kaddish*, and *Keddushah*, a selection very similar to Lipschitz's list of texts that Ashkenazic cantors used to expand musically), and these were set for unaccompanied male voice. New music in the contemporary styles thus covered a very small fraction of the services. The rest was strictly performed in a traditional style, which included orally transmitted Sephardic tunes taught in Amsterdam by "Oriental" cantors hired in the early seventeenth century to teach the *conversos* the "authentic" musical lore of Jewish Iberia. Thus, musical memory and exclusivity cohabited with innovation and inclusivity.

EASTERN EUROPE

While historians stress early modern musical encounters between Jewish and non-Jewish cultures in such key locations as northeastern Italy, Amsterdam, and northern Germany, they have given less attention to similar intersections occurring in eastern Europe during the same period. Modern perceptions of eastern European Judaism as "traditional" or "ghettoized" until at least the mid nineteenth century, and thus as less open to musical interaction with others, have obscured and overlooked the reality of early cross-cultural musical interactions in eastern Europe.

A patent and well-documented case of such interactions is the music of the itinerant Jewish instrumentalists in eastern Europe, the *klezmorim*. The strong link between Jewish musicians and their Rom (gypsy) counterparts apparently started in the early period of Ashkenazic settlement (the fifteenth century) in southeastern Europe, and continued well into the modern era in Transylvania, Bessarabia (Moldavia), Bukovina, and the Carpathian mountains. The situation was no different in Bohemia or in the Polish Commonwealth where Jewish communities enjoyed relative freedom and their musicians were granted privileges by the authorities. By the mid seventeenth century, the guild of Jewish musicians in Prague was so well entrenched in the city that power struggles between Jewish and Christian musicians broke out when the Archbishop of Prague, Ernst Albrecht von Harrach, granted a new privilege to the Jewish guild of musicians in 1641.

This privilege allowed Jews to play at Christian weddings, baptismal feasts, and festive days. Complaints about this measure by the Christian musicians' guild led to the involvement of the city council and Emperor Ferdinand III in the affair. After a withdrawal from their decision in favor of the Jews, the authorities reinstated their decision in 1651.[12] The massive stylistic complexity of the klezmer repertoires documented by modern research reveals that such interactions with eastern European and Middle Eastern Christian and Muslim musical cultures occurred throughout the early modern period. For example, late medieval German contra-dance survived in the traditional Jewish *sher*, conceptualized in the modern period as one of the most "authentic" Jewish genres.

Serving non-Jewish constituencies was an integral component of the klezmer craft and thus command of an array of "non-Jewish" styles was mandatory. At the same time, non-Jewish musicians in eastern Europe appeared at events in Jewish communities, playing "Jewish" materials, thus creating mutual musical exchanges. Disentangling nowadays the "Jewish" from the "non-Jewish" in the klezmer repertoires that survived in oral traditions is an academic concern that says more about modern Jewish sensibilities than about the musical milieu that *klezmorim* had to navigate.

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Another early modern shift in the musical culture of Jews took place in the eastern Mediterranean starting in the early sixteenth century. The encounter between immigrant Sephardic and local Romaniote Jews in the thriving Ottoman Empire launched a new period of Jewish involvement in a major Islamic urban musical culture – in this case, the Ottoman one. Evolving in the Sultan's palace and the aristocracy, as well as in Sufi lodges, a sophisticated amalgam of Persian and Turkish traditions merged in a new style based on a system of musical modes (sing. *makam*), rhythmic cycles (sing. *usul*) of Arabic–Persian pedigree, and composed instrumental and vocal forms. Jewish musicians took an active part in the performance and composition of this music within the Palace and outside it, in their homes and synagogues.

An expression of this process is *Zemirot Yisrael* (Safed, 1587; Salonika, 1599/1600; Venice, 1600), a collection of religious poems for daily devotions, Sabbath vigils, and holy-days by Rabbi Israel Najara (*c.* 1550–1625), classified by Ottoman *makams* and bearing in their titles instructions as to the Turkish, Spanish, or Greek melody to which each Hebrew poem

[12] Paul Nettl, *Alte Jüdische Spielleute und Musiker* (Prague, 1923), 49–55.

was to be sung. Jewish expertise in Ottoman music soon spread into the normative liturgy too, becoming a hallmark of Jewish musical expression throughout Turkey, the Balkans, and the Arab provinces of the Empire.

Interestingly, this involvement of Jews in Ottoman music was accompanied by discourses about the transformative powers of music in enhancing and facilitating mystical experiences that parallel those found in Italy at about the same period. In the Ottoman sphere, these ideas emerged from contacts between Jewish poets and musicians with Sufi circles. Areas of music-making would extend now to non-liturgical devotions of mystical background taking place in synagogues or private homes (usually at night). In his *Shete yadot*, Bible scholar and kabbalist Menaḥem ben Yehudah de Lonzano (1550 – before 1624) addressed the powers of music in relation to contemporary Jewish musical practices. Lonzano, who was active in Jerusalem and Constantinople, testified that "for many years" he studied "Islamic" (Turkish, and seldom Arabic) songs[13] and set his own *pizmonim* ("religious songs with refrain") to their melodies. These melodies were not intended for frivolous pleasure (as café songs) but to arouse feelings of devotion and humility in his and all performers' sinful hearts.[14] Intense melodic expression was achieved by Muslim (read: Turkish) singers because they reached the highest pitches that a human voice can produce (the biblical *'alei asor* is interpreted by Lonzano as the tenth note above the second pitch of the general scale). Aware of rabbinical objections to the use of foreign melodies to sing Hebrew hymns, and himself strongly critical of the practice of imitating sounds of foreign words in Hebrew poems (especially of Israel Najara), he solemnly declared that he used foreign tunes only because they are closer to the perfection alluded to in several biblical verses.[15] Lonzano's musical observations summarized the readiness of Ottoman Jewish intellectuals to succumb to the power of the other's music in order to achieve a heightened religious experience.

Eventually, in its path to becoming the musical capital of exclusive postcolonial national identities, much of this shared imperial and multidenominational Ottoman music was privatized by the interests of modern nations, becoming thus "Jewish" or "Turkish" music. At the same time, the political interests of these new nations sometimes manipulated the shared music of the past to improve positions in the present. Such are the intermittent public displays of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian musical partnership promoted by the Turkish Republic.

[13] Menaḥem ben Yehudah de Lonzano, *Shete yadot* (Venice, 1618), 141b. [14] Ibid., 65b.
[15] Ibid., 142a.

CONCLUSION

With the premise that early modern musical expressions among Jews cannot be measured exclusively by their degree of openness to the music of the non-Jews, we have examined several case studies from diverse geographical and social settings. However, in early modern texts about music in Jewish contexts one can detect a growing awareness of the inherent threats that musical openness poses to the maintenance of the Jewish community as a distinctive social entity. This threat is of a dual nature. Jewish musicians actively participating in the musical life of non-Jews could be lost to their communities, as would frequently occur in the modern period when major Jewish figures in the field of music would be forced to convert to either Christianity or Islam in order to ensure a successful professional career. Conversions of musicians of Jewish origin, even when their identity as Jews was already feeble, occurred in intolerant social contexts such as the late Austro-Hungarian Empire (in the case of the composer Gustav Mahler) or incipient independent Egypt (as in the case of singer Layla Murad). On a second level, the lack of a clear sonic demarcation between Jews and non-Jews could become emblematic of assimilation.

However, the criterion of sonic differentiation is not a universal trait in the early modern Jewish world. Clear differences emerge between the musical cultures of Jews under Islam and Christendom. In the latter case, an isolated soundscape was perceived as an ideal (especially in the music of the synagogue). Nevertheless, its implementation was doomed to failure given the constant permeability of musical relations between Jews outside the synagogue and non-Jews, as well as the changing musical tastes of the early modern European Jewish bourgeoisie. We have seen, time and again, how the zealot defenders of Jewish liturgical traditions, such as Zelichover and Lipschitz, battled the cantors who introduced new melodies from the gentile soundscape, primarily from the opera houses. The world of opera became the early modern epitome of the synagogue's musical "Other." Perhaps the earliest and most celebrated case was Myer Lyon (*c.* 1750–97), a *hazzan* of German origin who immigrated to England to serve at the Great Synagogue of London. He achieved fame as an opera singer in London and Dublin under the stage name of Michael Leoni. His nephew John Brahm, whom Leoni trained, followed his example to an even greater extent – i.e. with less commitment to the practice of Judaism and a higher success on the opera stage. Yet Brahm's glory did not spare him the venom of the antisemitic British critics. From the nineteenth century onwards, stories of cantors such as Lyon/Leoni or Brahm/Abrahams, who navigated between synagogue and opera houses, become more frequent, a symptom that the lure of fame and glory was a constant

source of temptation for the gifted European, and later on North American, cantors of modernity.

In the case of the world of Islam, the mutual musical experience of Jews and Muslims was not perceived as a threat to Jewish distinctiveness. On the contrary, music-making by Jews under Islam was a widely accepted practice that straightforwardly permeated into the synagogue too. The absence in the lands of Islam of the possibility of becoming other than a Jew – i.e., a citizen of the state without religious affiliation – mitigated, until the twentieth century, the sense that practicing music in cooperation with Muslims, or in Muslim spaces such as souks or cafés, could jeopardize Jewish identity. This was true even in the unique cases of Algeria – a country that became a French colony as early as 1830 – where Jews were granted the option of taking French citizenship in 1870, and the Ottoman Empire after the constitution of 1876. Paradoxically, when colonialism, European and Jewish European (via agencies such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle), penetrated the lands of Islam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a sense of Jewish sonic exceptionalism expanded to Islamic Jewries as well. Growing tensions and competition between Jewish and Muslim musicians in countries such as Algeria, Egypt, and Iraq, even if sporadic, were a harbinger of the rupture that occurred later on around the events of 1948. Many Jewish musicians in the realm of Islam were forced to choose between conversion and emigration, thus ending a millennium and a half of shared soundscapes. As we have remarked in this chapter, these dilemmas had affected the Jewish musicians of Christendom since the early modern period.

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Somerset, and now dispersed to the nourishment of the travelling members of this kingdome (Glasgow, 1905 [1611]), I.

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PART III

THE JEWISH WORLD, *c.* 1650–1815

CHAPTER 28

JUDAISM IN GERMANY (1650–1815)

DEBORAH HERTZ

JEWISH SPACE, JEWISH TIME

In the autumn of the year 1603, twenty-six rabbis and other prominent Jewish personalities from across the western and southern towns in the Habsburg kingdom gathered at the annual trade fair in Frankfurt am Main.[1] Their aim was to found a regional authority with the power to regulate observance, judicial proceedings, economic practices, tax collection, and the appointment of rabbis. At the time, their plan appeared to be entirely in step with timeworn traditions. Such regional synods, called *Landjudenschaften*, had flourished in various locations across central Europe throughout the late medieval and early modern centuries.

But the new regional synod never was created, even after years of planning and negotiating. The unraveling of this project began with discontent within the small Frankfurt Jewish community. A local butcher who had been accused of non-kosher slaughtering was denied an official position as community butcher.[2] In a fury at his exclusion, the butcher delivered documents describing the planned synod to the Frankfurt City Council and to the imperial government. The angry imperial officials charged the synod planners with plotting against the Empire. For the next twenty years, their proposal remained in dispute. The Jewish notables reminded imperial officials that *Landjudenschaften* had been permitted in the past. In time, the City Council dropped the charges against the Jewish notables, but the imperial authorities held firm and opposed any regional synod.

[1] See Marcus Horovitz, *Die Frankfurter Rabbinerversammlung von Jahre 1603* (Frankfurt, 1897), as well as Isidor Kracauer, *Geschichte der Juden im Frankfurt am Main*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1925–7). For background, see Gerald Lyman Soliday, *A Community in Conflict: Frankfurt Society in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Hanover, NH, 1974).

[2] Mordechai Breuer, "Part One: The Early Modern Period," in Michael Meyer, ed., *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 4 vols. (New York, 1996), I, 88.

From our far distance in time, we can easily understand what the prominent Jews planning their new assembly learned over years of wrangling. Their proposal for a new regional Jewish authority was no longer in step with the changing times. At the time they proposed the synod, Judaism was at once a highly regulated set of rituals and a cohesive social order, and the integration of the religious and civic spheres was remarkably seamless.[3] When the Frankfurt notables proposed their synod in 1603, the Council of the Four Lands in the Kingdom of Poland–Lithuania was still thriving. That Council, which lasted from 1580 to 1664, was the most expansive version of a "state within a state" ever achieved in the European past. The term "state within a state" referred to the wide range of functions administered by medieval and early modern Jewish communities.

What the Frankfurt notables had in mind when they met that autumn in 1603 was far more modest than the Polish Council of the Four Lands. Still, although their aims were properly "medieval," the political reality around them was shifting. By 1603, imperial officials no longer desired an efficient regional Jewish "state within a state." The Jewish civic autonomy that had been in place for centuries was gradually becoming obsolete. In the 165 years that we explore in this chapter, we see the decline of ritual observance among the Jews in the Germanic lands. Lax religious practices meant that rabbis and community elites were more and more deprived of their power to regulate the wider community. And, much more slowly, the civic functions once administered by the Jewish elites were taken over by the towns and small states, which became stronger as the governing powers of the Holy Roman Empire declined.

The paradox was that, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Jews had fewer choices about where to live and how to earn their living, they enjoyed more religious, social, and civic autonomy as a minority. As we move forward into the eighteenth century, Jews in central Europe were granted greater stability of residence. But the towns and states which provided this stability were simultaneously reducing the freedom for self-rule Jews had previously enjoyed.

By the time that we arrive at our end point of 1815, both town councils and state bureaucracies were intervening in ritual practices and constraining Jewish autonomy more and more often. The trade-off for the Jews was meant to be entry into mainstream civil society as citizens. Meanwhile, the power of the rabbis and community elders was diminishing to the vanishing point. During the French Revolution, the terms of this exchange became crystal clear. This is what Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre meant

[3] Jacob Katz and Bernard Cooperman, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1993).

when he observed that the revolutionary government in France should "deny everything to the Jews as a nation and deny nothing to them as individuals."[4]

Alas, long after our chapter ends in 1815, the goal of equal citizenship had rarely been achieved in the Germanic lands. Some historians and other contemporary observers deny that either emancipation or assimilation were ever really successful. This is why Gershom Scholem characterized the entire era as having begun with a "false start," because German Jewish leaders were too ready to give up their internal governance.[5]

Just how Jewish life changed during the early modern era in the lands that later became Germany is pertinent for our understanding of the causes of Nazism. We need to know exactly how Jews and Judaism evolved gradually over the centuries. We need to understand the historical choices which Jews in far-off times faced, and how the choices they made – or their leaders made for them – changed the future of the Jewish people. To write Jewish history we must restore the agency of individuals who lived at the time, so as to avoid casting them as passive victims. The existence of antisemitism should not be a default historical explanation for events and processes in which Jewish choices played a role as well. Exploring what those choices were at the beginning of the modern era will help us to evaluate the still-popular discontinuity interpretations, which seek to explain Nazism by focusing on events during the era of the First World War and the interwar years.

Across the 165 years charted in these pages, we see the early signs of a basic pattern. Acculturation made assimilation possible, and then successful assimilation generated racial rather than religious hatred. The disregard of traditional rituals enabled social integration with Christians. As time went by, more and more Jews passed as Christians and were accepted by Christians as friends, hosts, and marriage partners. It was precisely this social success which frustrated hostile observers, who turned to a racialized antisemitism long after this chapter closes in 1815. The point is that we must know the long past in order to decide its causal relevance for explaining Nazi genocide.

A major theme we explore in this chapter is the increasingly oligarchic economic structure of many Jewish communities in the two centuries which followed the doomed synod plan of 1603. Again and again we watch how necessary wealth was in pursuit of princely patronage and hence the precious right to settle one's family. Permanent rights of

[4] The famous quote can be found in Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre, *Reimpression de l'ancien Moniteur (May 1789 – November 1799)* (Paris, 1842–3), 23.

[5] See Gershon Scholem, "Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue," in Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays* (New York, 1976), 61–4.

residence were rare in the region. This was a very central dilemma faced by Jews in the Germanic lands in this era. Wealth was necessary to meet the conditions imposed by town and state authorities. Through this system, financial resources became more concentrated in the hands of the few. The notables who achieved such prosperity did their part to help settle other Jews and negotiate the way toward civic emancipation. Thus, the value of the oligarchic notables was legitimized and even celebrated. The Court Jews who served emerging states and dynasties were both symbol and dynamic instruments of the system.

Although their residence patterns within the region were altogether unstable, the Jews of central Europe had never suffered total expulsion. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the entire Jewish populations of Spain, Portugal, England and France were expelled. But in central Europe no single ruler, not even a Habsburg emperor, was powerful enough to order the Jews to leave the entire region. In the Germanic lands, the pattern of expulsion was enacted on the local rather than the national level. The larger towns often expelled their Jews, who moved on and arranged permission to settle in smaller towns. A desirable destination was the Kingdom of Poland–Lithuania, which offered attractive terms of settlement in the late medieval era. The consequence of the local expulsions was that the Jewish population was distributed very sparsely across the towns of central Europe. Tiny and isolated Jewish communities made for a less learned and far less dynamic religious atmosphere. Their sparse distribution across the mini-states and towns where they were allowed to live helps to explain why Jews in this region have been described as pioneers in the "abandonment of tradition on a massive scale."[6]

The task of drawing a clear geographical border around the area we examine in this article reveals the complexity of this past. The terms *central European Jewry* and Jews in the *Germanic lands* refer in an admittedly imprecise way to the space covered here. The division of Jewry then into *Sephardic* and *Ashkenazic* Jews complicates the picture, since after the expulsions from Spain and Portugal, these two streams of the Jewish population were no longer neatly separated by space. Moreover, even our understanding of how to define *Ashkenazic* and *Sephardic* is complicated, with some definitions emphasizing language and other definitions emphasizing geography.[7]

[6] Adam Ferziger, *Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy, Nonobservance, and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia, 2005), 16.

[7] See Joseph Davis, "The Reception of the *Shulhan Arukh* and the Formation of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 26: 2 (2002), at 253.

When seeking a way to draw the borders around central Europe in our era, historians often project backward in time the 1871 borders of Germany. But this retroactive construction is too small for the early modern era. The approximate map of Ashkenazi Jewry is in turn too large, because it includes countries such as the Kingdom of Poland–Lithuania to the east, and Holland, France, and England to the west. By default, here we rely on the borders of the Holy Roman Empire. But even this boundary is inexact, for we shall exit this boundary to examine life in the Jewish community of Metz, a German-speaking town in Alsace Lorraine, which was inside the borders of France. And Prussia, one of the most dynamic states in the region, was only partially within the borders of the Habsburg Empire. Yet another example of our messy geography is that Altona, an important Jewish town near Hamburg, was on the Danish side of the border.

Just as we need to anchor ourselves in space, so we need to anchor ourselves in time. The labels we confer on large swathes of time reflect our conclusions about the dominant trends of particular epochs. Just as we have no firm spatial boundaries for our inquiry, so too historians of the Jewish people lack the timeworn historical epochs assumed by scholars who write the history of an established nation-state. Indeed, defining the appropriate divisions between huge swathes of time continues to be debated among historians of Jewry. Some would use the language of medieval times, and argue that these centuries were "dark" for the Jews because of how oppressed they were by hostile local populations. Others would turn the focus inward, pointing to the superstitious and primitive practices and beliefs held by many Jews at the time. Other historians argue that the entire notion of dark times does not describe the Jewish situation in that period, noting the high rates of literacy and religious education so characteristic of the Jewish state within a state. Because of so much disagreement, we are wise to avoid the debates about the dark times by using the label of "early modern" for the years covered in this chapter.[8]

Before we enter the sweep of time, we must familiarize ourselves with the internal workings of the local communities included in our inquiry. To begin with, the continuity of particular localities was highly unstable. One of the paradoxes of the era was that, because of expulsions, many of the Jewish communities in central Europe disappeared as time went on. Indeed, few of the more than 1,000 Jewish communities flourishing during the medieval era were still thriving in 1815.[9] So, much of the Jewish population lived sparsely distributed across the Germanic lands.

[8] See David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010).

[9] This is noted by Dean Phillip Bell, *Jewish Identity in Early Modern Germany: Memory, Power and Community* (Aldershot, 2007), 38.

Nevertheless, we see a very dramatic increase in sheer numbers in our period. In this case, insecure residence patterns did not lead to a declining population. On the contrary, the Jewish population in central and western Europe increased from approximately 75,000 in 1650 to 700,000 in 1800, almost ten-fold growth. Meanwhile, the overall world Jewish population increased by only three-fold in the same era.[10]

To understand how new towns and principalities became open to Jewish settlement, we must grasp the central importance of the Court Jews, who were also called "court factors." Central Europe in our era was a very special time for Court Jews, and their number for the entire region and era has been estimated to have been in the thousands.[11] The same lack of central power which made eventual German unification so thorny was precisely what led to the flourishing of these enriched servants of the rulers. A Court Jew was a financier affiliated with a duke or a prince or a king who provided a range of needed services difficult to procure elsewhere. They might exchange currencies, supply armies, loan money, provide luxury goods, and sometimes mint coins for their patrons. The Court Jews paved the way for the less fortunate Jews who worked as their rabbis, butchers, tutors, and domestic servants. They created the conditions which evolved into permanent rights to settle a Jewish family in that area. The decentralized political landscape of the Germanic lands definitely helps to explain the high numbers of Court Jews in our era.

We can point to other explanations too. Earning interest had long been restricted by Catholic doctrine. Moreover, as is well known, Jews were rarely allowed to own land and so were forced into financial occupations. Then, too, the guild organization of artisanal production discouraged entrepreneurship.[12] Finally, the absence of a single capital city in central Europe hindered the emergence of organized banking. For all of these reasons, the Court Jews became convenient agents of high finance in central Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

When we ponder some of the things they did to secure a place in the ruler's entourage, the dark shadows of their legacy emerge. Of particular concern was their willingness to mint and distribute debased coins, a

[10] See S. Ettinger, "The Modern Period," pt. 6 of H. H. Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), 792. A considerably smaller estimate of the number of Jews in the "German Empire" is proposed by Bell, *Jewish Identity* (38), who notes that this area included 35,000 to 40,000 Jews in the year 1600.

[11] Breuer in Meyer, ed., *German-Jewish History*, I, 106. See Richard Cohen and Vivian Mann, eds., *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power, 1600–1800* (Munich, 1996).

[12] The classic work for this era is Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State and General Estate 1648–1871* (Ithaca, 1971).

common technique when the ruler desired an inflation. When the unlucky recipients of the debased coins discovered the true silver content in a coin they received, they raged against the ruler's Court Jew, and, sometimes, against the wider Jewish population as well. The religious role of the Court Jews was ambiguous. To be sure, some of the most prosperous sponsored *yeshivot* in their homes. But, as time went on, there were more and more Court Jews who dressed as Christians and abandoned traditional ritual practices.[13] The most acculturated and apparently successful Court Jew, Joseph Süß Oppenheimer, prospered in the retinue of Duke Karl Alexander of Württemberg. After the Duke's death in 1737, Oppenheimer was put on trial and sentenced to death. The community's attempt to ransom him failed and he refused to save his life by baptism. His corpse was allowed to rot in public view in a cage for six years before he was buried. Since his death, the circumstances of his prosperity and the causes of his downfall have been explored in fiction and cinema.[14]

Precisely because so many Jews of central Europe were drifting away from tradition, it was in that setting that the Jewish Enlightenment, called the "Haskalah" in Hebrew, emerged toward the end of our era. The Haskalah was a spectacular contribution made by German Jewry to the history of Judaism, and indeed to the Jewish people. The *maskilim*, as the advocates for a specifically *Jewish* Enlightenment were called, promoted the mastery of secular languages, contemporary science, and social thought. They also articulated a negative critique of superstition and rituals they considered antiquated. Indeed, one of the targets of the *maskilim* was the religious control so central to how the state within the state operated.[15] In this way, their critiques matched up quite well with the intent of civil rulers to curtail the autonomy of the local communities.

[13] See the standard work in English, Selma Stern, *Court Jews* (Philadelphia, 1950), as well as five more recent studies in German: Friedrich Battenberg and Rotraud Ries, *Hofjuden – Ökonomie und Interkulturalität. Die jüdische Wirtschaftselite im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 2002); Sabine Hödl, Barbara Staudinger, and Peter Rauscher, *Hofjuden und Landjuden. Jüdisches Leben in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2004); Carl-Josef Virnich, *Die Berliner Hofjuden. Jüdisches Lebensläufe im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Marburg, 1997); Thekla Keuck, *Hofjuden und Kulturbürger: Die Geschichte der Familie Itzig in Berlin* (Göttingen, 2011); and Berndt Strobach, *Privilegiert in engen Grenzen: Neue Beiträge zu Leben, Wirken und Umfeld des halberstäter Hofjuden Berend Lehman* (City, 2011).

[14] Recent scholarship on Oppenheimer in German includes Hellmut Haasis, *Joseph Süß Oppenheimer genannt Jud Süß: Finanzier, Freidenker, Justizopfer* (Frankfurt, 2001), and Alexandra Przyrembel and Jörg Schönert, *Jud Süß: Hofjude, Literarische Figur, antisemitisches Zerrbild* (Frankfurt, 2006).

[15] For a very innovative approach to the origins of the Haskalah, see Asriel Schochat, *Im Hilufei Tekufot: Reshit ha-Haskalah be Yahadut Germanya* (Jerusalem, 1960). The German translation is: *Der Ursprung der jüdische Aufklärung in Deutschland* (Frankfurt, 2000).

The legacy of the Haskalah, which first emerged toward the end of our era, was remarkable: maskilic approaches contributed to Reform, and Liberal, and even modern Orthodox streams of Judaism. Modern secular Zionism also begins with the Haskalah, especially the renewal of modern Hebrew. As we close the nineteenth century in the Pale of Settlement to the east of the Germanic lands, maskilic values helped to catalyze a lively spectrum of cultural, social, and nationalist political parties and movements. Historians of modern Jewry who emphasize the Germanic setting for the early Haskalah have been criticized by other historians for their Germanocentric approach to the Jewish past. At the time and since, many in Germany especially viewed the Hasidic movement, which emerged in eastern Europe during the middle decades of the eighteenth century, as having been too magical and mystical to be truly modern. Recently, historians of Jews in eastern Europe have challenged the notion that the Haskalah was the sole path to modernity.[16]

As time went on, more and more *maskilim* pointed their critiques at the ways that the wealthy Jews dominated their communities. As tutors in well-to-do households, *maskilim* may well have learned from their own painful experiences how wealth and learning were reversing their relative positions in the Jewish value system. Over time, the power of the richest lay notables increased, while the status of learning and the influence of the learned waned. The causes for this gradual reversal were various. Because of the sparsely distributed population and lack of large cities, charismatic teachers, preachers, and rabbis found it difficult to gather around them a crowd of acolytes in a *yeshiva*. And, obviously, the stupendous wealth of the most successful Court Jews and their role in creating new settlements strengthened their power within communities.

Economic power and internal civic governance were typically entangled. The wealthiest Jews dominated the official positions in the local communities, referred to in Hebrew as *kehillot*, or in German as *Gemeinden*. A *kehillah* was a self-governing association to which all Jews who lived in a particular locality were required to belong. We understand better what the state within a state meant in daily life when we note the scope of local *kehillot*. At least in principle, the authority of the *kehillah* derived from the ritual laws, as interpreted by religious scholars. The *kehillot* supervised not just synagogue rituals, but also social and charity activities. Each *kehillah* collected taxes and then spent those monies to pay for a huge range of

[16] See Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004), 1–2. See also Jacob Katz, *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987). Also of relevance is Jonathan Hess, *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven, 2002).

employees and services. *Kehillot* supervised the Jewish courts, medical care, relations with state authorities, dowry funds, primary and secondary education, kosher butchering, care of the ill and elderly, as well as the religious life of the locale.

A continuing tension in the *kehillot* was the disputed power of the lay notables. Across time and place, money and scholarship were very often intertwined in Jewish families. Gifted *yeshiva* students were prestigious matches for the daughters of the wealthy. A telling example of the ever-fading intensity of religious learning was that the rabbis who administered the rabbinical courts were more and more often writing their decisions in Yiddish rather than Hebrew. The decline in Hebrew knowledge and Talmud mastery meant that German Jewry could not produce enough teachers for the elementary *ḥederim*, and especially for the *yeshivot*. The solution was to import religious teachers from points east. Indeed, during our era, the long-standing migration eastward toward the Kingdom of Poland–Lithuania reversed itself in a very fundamental way.[17]

MORE STABILITY, LESS AUTONOMY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

A decade after the rabbis and notables met to plan their ill-fated synod, Frankfurt am Main was also the setting for a much more visible disturbance that threatened the thriving Jewish community there.[18] The Jews of Frankfurt were caught in the middle of an ongoing feud between local guilds and the wealthy citizens who dominated the Town Council. The local artisans also harbored grievances against Jews who circulated counterfeit coins and who appeared to profit from what the artisans thought were high interest rates. In 1612, the craft guilds made a stand, requesting a limit to the number of Jews in Frankfurt and lower interest rates. Their demands were rejected by both the Town Council and the Emperor. We see writ small in this incident the paradox of Jewish life then and there. Although the Habsburg empire and emerging states were curtailing Jewish religious autonomy, Jews very much needed those powers to protect them from angry crowds who resented the very wealth necessary to gain residential stability.

[17] The classic work is Moses Shulvass, *From East to West: The Westward Migration of Jews from Eastern Europe during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Detroit, 1971).

[18] For some recent publications, see Eugen Mayer, *The Jews of Frankfurt: Glimpses of the Past* (Frankfurt, 1990); Alexander Dietz, *The Jewish Community of Frankfurt: A Genealogical Study 1349–1849* (Camelford, UK, 1988); and David Ellenson, *Modernization and the Jews of Nineteenth-Century Frankfurt and Berlin* (Minneapolis, 1988).

After two years of simmering conflict, in August of 1614, a crowd of angry artisans led by the baker Vincent Fettmilch began assaulting Jews, who vigorously but unsuccessfully defended the Jewish quarter. Over 1,000 Jews were then escorted out of town. Meanwhile, in the words of a contemporary, "the wicked villains kindled fire wherewith they burnt the revered books, and baked dry meat on them."[19]

The role of the imperial government was complex. Some historians have argued that, eleven years earlier, when imperial officials opposed the synod, their policy had been an "open invitation to the population to indulge in aggressive violence."[20] Yet once the Fettmilch movement became violent, the imperial crown came to the rescue by canceling the expulsions. Soon, the Emperor had even ordered the execution of Fettmilch and his closest comrades. The exiled Jews were invited back to town, and given a musical welcome with pipes and drums. Historians seem to be in agreement that the outcome of the Fettmilch episode demonstrated that "the worst pressures of the Jewish Middle Ages had come to an end."[21] Yet, from our further distance in time, we need to consider a dark side to both the 1603 synod episode and the Fettmilch rebellion. Between the fury of the lower classes and the highly ambivalent patronage of their powerful sponsors, the Jews of central Europe remained very much at risk.

We have seen how the political landscape in the Germanic lands provided unique opportunities to wealthy Jews because of the plethora of small principalities and states. Once the Protestant Reformation had begun in the early years of the sixteenth century, the religious landscape also became more and more diverse. New streams of Christianity definitely affected the status of Judaism, for now Judaism was no longer the sole outsider religion.[22] Moreover, the continuously evolving divisions among Christians created economic opportunities for Jewish financiers.

[19] This quote is from a "contemporary Hebrew lament," cited without primary source reference in H. H. Ben-Sasson, "The Middle Ages," pt. 5 of Ben-Sasson, *Jewish People*, 653.

[20] Breuer in Meyer, ed., *German-Jewish History*, I, 91.

[21] Ibid., 94. Two recent volumes on the episode are Christopher Friedrichs, *The Fettmilch Uprising in German and Jewish History* (Atlanta, 1986), and Helen Elhanan and Rivka Ulmer, *Turmoil, Trauma and Triumph: The Fettmilch Uprising in Frankfurt am Main* (New York, 2002).

[22] Across the centuries, a considerable body of theological volumes have addressed the problematic of Luther and the Jews. For a recent perspective in English, see Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen Burnett, *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Boston, 2006), and Magda Teter, *Sinners on Trial: Jews and Sacrilege after the Reformation* (Cambridge, 2011).

It all began when Martin Luther famously initiated the process of sectarian divide when he posted his call for reform on the door of the Wittenberg church in 1517. For over three decades, religious conflict created political conflict. In 1555, the Peace of Augsburg was intended to sort out this enormous problem, by establishing the principle that each political unit across the German lands would endorse one version of Christianity. Families could move to the state which espoused their affiliation. But, as time passed, the process of religious sectarianism continued beyond the region governed by the Peace of Augsburg. In 1618, Protestants in Bohemia revolted against the strict Catholic practice enforced by the Habsburg Empire, and their revolt catalyzed the Thirty Years' War.

This untidy and lengthy war provided significant opportunities for the Court Jews and those in their orbit. Military conflict required army suppliers, moneylenders, and traders. Several princes, needing to inflate their currency, relied heavily on their Court Jews to produce and distribute debased coins. A striking case was Jacob Bassevi. Bassevi lived in Prague, an important center of both Jewish learning and Jewish finance. Many Prague Jews stood ready to aid the Empire with their financial services. In gratitude for his help in minting debased coins, in 1622, Bassevi was knighted by the Emperor and received the name Ritter von Treuenberg. This made him the first Jew in the Holy Roman Empire to become a knight.

Beginning in 1644, the opposing parties in the war began negotiations, but it took a full four years to agree to the final terms, which emerged during the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The year 1648 was also an immensely important one in the Jewish past, not in the Germanic lands, but to the east, in Ukraine. For it was there that a Cossack army, under the leadership of Bogdan Khmelnytsky, began a revolt against the Polish nobility. Again, in a vastly different economic setting, the Jews were caught in the crossfire. For centuries, the Polish nobles who owned land and towns in the Kingdom of Poland–Lithuania had been providing extensive opportunities to Jewish tavern keepers, grain producers, and tax collectors. Indeed, it was these opportunities which attracted Jews to migrate eastward during the late medieval era.

For the Ukrainians, Khmelnytsky's insurgency is known as the Cossack Revolt, which they celebrate as a milestone in their long struggle for national autonomy. Historians of the Jews, in contrast, often refer to the Cossack Revolt as the "Khmelnytsky massacre," or sometimes the "massacres of 1648 and 1649."[23] This was by far the most widespread and

[23] Ben-Sasson, pt. 5 of *Jewish People*, 656.

devastating pogrom of the era, and, when it was over, Jews had departed from hundreds of local communities.[24] Historians estimate that between 10,000 and 15,000 Jews migrated to central Europe after the 1648 pogroms.[25] Many had a good mastery of Jewish learning and observance and found ready employment as rabbis, cantors, teachers, ritual slaughterers, and caretakers of synagogues. For example, the students and the director of an entire *yeshiva* in Krakow moved to Vienna.[26]

During the decades immediately after the Khmelnytsky uprising, the Jewish world of the Ottoman Empire was shaken to its foundations by the Sabbatean messianic movement. Again, the epicenter was far to the east of our region, but the upheaval affected Jews in the Germanic lands as well. Sabbatai Zevi was born in 1626 in Smyrna, a port city in the Ottoman Empire, and his dynamic propagandist Nathan of Gaza lived in Palestine. Sabbatai and Nathan of Gaza attracted enthusiasts from far and wide across eastern and central Europe as well as in their home territory in the southeastern region of the Ottoman lands. After Sabbatai traveled across the Ottoman Empire, eighteen years later the Ottoman rulers were sufficiently alarmed by his assertive demands to give him the choice of conversion to Islam or death. He chose conversion in September of 1666, and he and his followers became a syncretist sect within Islam called the *Dönmeh*.[27]

The Sabbatean movement raised many difficult issues within Judaism. The most central was whether or not Judaism was indeed a messianic religion. If Judaism was a messianic faith, then how could contemporaries distinguish Judaism from Christianity? A new kind of religious syncretism was emerging. Indeed, during the early eighteenth century, we find cases of Sabbatai's followers who converted to Christianity.[28] Some of them were not ready to give up Judaism, and so tried to express the messianic mandate in other ways. One of the more dramatic episodes involved two Polish Sabbateans, Ḥayyim ben Solomon of Kalisz and Judah Ḥasid of

[24] The reference to "hundreds of local communities" comes from Breuer in Meyer, ed., *German-Jewish History*, I, 97. Scholars continue to explore the precise number of Jews who lost their lives in this episode. One recent approximate number is 13,000, as cited in Hundert, *Poland–Lithuania*, 15 n. 32.

[25] Breuer in Meyer, *German-Jewish History*, I, 247. [26] Ibid., 98.

[27] See Matt Goldish, *The Shabbatean Prophets* (Boston, 2004), as well as Goldish's *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Detroit, 2003). For a recent analysis of women's roles in the Sabbatean movement, see Ada Rapoport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Shabbatei Zevi 1666–1816* (London, 2011). From a Muslim perspective, see Marc Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (New York, 2008), and Baer's *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks* (Stanford, 2010).

[28] See Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1700* (New Haven, 2001), 73–85.

Szydlowiec, who attracted several hundred enthusiasts. In 1700, with financial aid from the Viennese Court Jew Samuel Oppenheim, they all emigrated to Jerusalem, where they expected to meet up with Sabbatai himself.[29]

In the cities across central Europe, we see numerous innovative rituals influenced by kabbalistic practices. New prayers and songs were arranged for the Sabbath eve; it became customary in some circles to speak only Hebrew on the Sabbath, and we find rabbis who fasted regularly and immersed themselves in ritual baths. Rabbi Naphtali Cohen from Frankfurt, in office there during the first decade of the eighteenth century, was known for his "incantations, amulets, and magical healing methods."[30]

Historians have pointed to various possible causes for the rapid radicalization and popularity of Sabbatean messianism. An older explanation points to the distress of the Khmelnytsky uprising. But we must wonder how intensely Sabbatai Zevi's followers in Smyrna or Constantinople or Gaza identified with the Jews who suffered from the massive pogrom in Ukraine. Another way to link the uprising of 1648–9 with the Sabbatean phenomenon is to argue that the Sabbateans projected a quasi-nationalist ethos of Jewish self-rule. For this reason, Gershom Scholem famously argued that Sabbateanism can well be seen as a proto-Zionist movement.[31] Another explanation of the wide support for Sabbatai Zevi before his conversion to Islam was the growing social unrest within local Jewish communities spread apart in faraway places. Since the rabbis and talmudic learning were usually supported by the wealthy notables, some observers then and now interpret antinomian practices as a veiled social protest.[32]

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as geographic stability increased, so did dramatic inequalities inside the Jewish population. The Court Jews and their retinues made up roughly 3 percent of the Jewish population. Another 20 percent could be considered well-to-do, and a quarter could be ranked in the lower middle class.[33] The remaining proportion often found it difficult to gain permission to join the established communities. The number of *Betteljuden*, or "vagabond beggar Jews," grew from year to year. Indeed, the rootless poor Jews who survived by peddling sometimes crossed the line to criminal activity. Vagabond beggar Jews could never meet the financial requirements for Jews to settle,

[29] The classic work from the modern scholar who rediscovered Zevi is by Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatei Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, 1976). A short summary can be found in Hundert, *Poland–Lithuania*, 154.

[30] Breuer, *German-Jewish History*, I, 228.

[31] See Ben Sasson, *Jewish People*, 703.

[32] This is the major conclusion reached by Mortimer Cohen in his antiquated but still useful volume, *Jacob Emden: A Man of Controversy* (Philadelphia, 1937), 265.

[33] These estimates are provided by Breuer, *German-Jewish History*, I, 245.

which were imposed by towns and states and administered by the community notables. Their exclusion from permanent settlement was the dark side of the lavish lives of the stable and prosperous.

The rough conditions at the bottom of the Jewish social hierarchy help to explain why Jewish robber bands emerged in this era. Almost a quarter of the words in *Rotwelsch* ("thieves' slang") are derived from Yiddish, linguistic evidence of this rather hidden social reality. Social deviance and poverty did not mean indifference to tradition. The robber bands declined to steal on the Sabbath and rarely if ever chose baptism.[34]

One of the most spectacular expulsions came toward the close of the seventeenth century. For decades, the imperial court had been resisting demands by the Vienna City Council to expel the Jews, because Council members were convinced that their trading practices were a threat to local merchants. In 1669, Emperor Leopold I did the bidding of the local Council, and issued an order to expel 1,346 Jews from Vienna. Most settled in Bohemia and Moravia, some went to Krakow, and others made their way to southern Germany. In May of 1671, the Great Elector Frederick William I of Brandenburg-Prussia invited two extended Viennese families to settle in Berlin. At the time, Berlin was almost completely empty of Jews, and had been since the expulsion from the state of Brandenburg in 1572. The modest founding of the Jewish community of Berlin that year turned out to be an important turning point in the German Jewish past. Prussia is often judged by posterity as militaristic and expansionist, and there is definitely justice in these labels. Yet the view of Prussia from the perspective of Jewish history is much more positive.[35]

The Elector of Brandenburg decided to invite Jews back to his territory for a variety of reasons, some economic and some religious. The ruling family, the Hohenzollerns, were Calvinists, yet most of their subjects were Lutherans. A sign of their positive status was that, less than half a century after they first arrived, the Berlin Jews were granted the right to erect a public community synagogue. On the Sabbath before Rosh Hashannah in 1714, Queen Sophie Dorothea, wife of King Frederick I, arrived at a new synagogue on the Heidereutergasse for its official dedication. This was a notable achievement, since in the founding documents of the community back in 1671 permission for such a building had been expressly denied.

[34] The classic work on the poor Jews of the era is Rudolf Glanz, *Geschichte des niederen jüdischen Volkes in Deutschland* (New York, 1968).

[35] For a summary of the expulsion of the Jews of Brandenburg and the slow process of reviving Jewish life in the region around Berlin, see Deborah Hertz, *How Jews Became Germans: The History of Conversion and Assimilation in Berlin* (New Haven, 2007), 17–24.

As the community grew in the Prussian capital city, well-to-do Jewish merchants were able to integrate into local high society, in part because Berlin lacked well-organized intellectual and cultural institutions. Neither the court nor urban aristocratic homes provided much cultural patronage, and the University of Berlin was not founded until the first decade of the nineteenth century. During the middle decades of the eighteenth century, as Berlin civil society became more organized, self-educated Jewish intellects found space for themselves in public life. As time moved forward, educated Jewish men were finding entrance to coffee houses, elite discussion clubs, reading clubs, and Freemasons' societies. A handful of Jewish women sponsored salons in their home, attended by a robust mix of nobles, commoner intellectuals, and other Jews.[36] Thanks in part to this intense exposure to the cultural elites of their town, Berlin would prove a hospitable environment for modernist Judaism.

A burning question faced by Jewish leaders and thinkers, as well as the Christian intelligentsia, was whether and how to expand the civic rights of Jews. By the end of the eighteenth century, the French Revolution had utterly transformed the terms of the debate. France had certainly made history by granting full equality to both Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews in 1791, and in the next several years the problematic of Jewish equality was increasingly a topic of discussion in the learned journals across the Germanic lands.[37] But Jews who turned to local and national governments to grant them emancipation faced many complicated barriers. The discontents of the artisans who had followed Vincent Fettmilch in the previous century were still very much alive and relevant, because across the towns in the Germanic lands artisans continued to resent capitalist ways, identified as Jewish. Moreover, just what it meant to be a political equal varied greatly across the Germanic lands. The political regimes administering their religious status were strikingly diverse. In the earlier centuries, the decentralized political landscape of the region had been a boon to wealthy Jews, who sponsored new settlements and whose prosperity contributed to the growth in Jewish population during these two centuries. But by the closing decades of the eighteenth century, the patchwork quilt of the Germanic lands proved an obstacle to emancipation, as we shall see as we conclude our tour.

[36] See Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven, 1988; Syracuse, 2005). See also Petra Dollinger-Wilhelmy, *Die Berliner Salons* (Berlin, 2000), and Barbara Hahn, *Jewess Pallas Athena: This Too a Theory of Modernity* (Princeton, 2005).

[37] For a recent volume comparing French and German patterns of emancipation, see Michael Brenner, Vicki Caron, and Uri Kaufman, eds., *Jewish Emancipation Reconsidered* (London, 2003), esp. the chapter by Frances Malino, "The Jewish Enlightenment in Berlin and Paris."

FROM SECTS TO ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Sabbatai Zevi's decision to convert certainly did not put an end to the power of magical Judaism, and indeed we see that the Kabbalah and critiques of learned Judaism continued to appear in new forms well into the eighteenth century. Eventually, the disruptive potential of the Sabbatean legacy would be silenced. But the manner in which the traditional institutions defended normative Judaism turned out to furnish a somewhat hollow victory in the long run.

We can learn much about the material conditions, the spiritual experiences, and the civic situation of Jews in central Europe in our era from the fascinating memoir written in Yiddish by Glikl bas Judah Leib, also known as Glückel of Hameln.[38] Glikl bas Judah Leib wrote the document over many years, intending her memories and advice to be read only by her children and their later descendants. Any modern reader must be impressed by how seamlessly Glikl integrated her roles as a believing Jew, a loyal community member, a dedicated wife, an attentive mother, and an enterprising businesswoman. She was fortunate in so many ways. Although her own parents arranged her teen marriage to her husband Chaim, their union was harmonious. As a parent, she could take joy that twelve of their children survived into adulthood.

When Sabbatai Zevi was at the height of his popularity in the Germanic lands, Glikl was a young wife and mother in Hamburg. In her memoir, she provided a picturesque anecdote which illustrates the range of Jews attracted to his teachings. Her father-in-law, Joseph Hameln, sold his house, expecting to sail for Palestine. He proceeded to send two large trunks to Glikl and her husband Chaim, filled with "peas, beans, dried meats, shredded prunes and like stuff, every manner of food that would keep."[39] The trunks were to be ready for the family's magical emigration to Palestine, as promised by Sabbatai Zevi. But after a year, when the holy cloud for which they waited failed to bring them to Palestine, her in-laws instructed them to "open the casks and remove the foodstuffs, to save the linens from ruin."[40]

[38] For an alternative English-language edition of the memoir, see Beth-Zion Abrahams, *The Life of Gluckel of Hameln* (London, 1962). For commentary, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, MA, 1995) – the chapter on Glikl is "Arguing with God: Glikl bas Judah Leib," 5–62. Monika Richarz has edited a collection of German-language essays on Glikl, see *Das Hamburger Kauffrau Glikl* (Hamburg, 2001). For a literary analysis and comparison to other Jewish memoirs, see Marcus Moseley, *Being For Myself Alone: Origins of Jewish Autobiography* (Stanford, 2006), 155–74.

[39] See Marvin Lowenthal's edition, *Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln* (New York, 1977), 46.

[40] Ibid., 47.

For Glikl, the Sabbatean movement had conclusively ended when the trunks of prunes and linens were unpacked. Indeed, during the first decades after his conversion to Islam, many rabbis, preachers, and lay notables who had denounced Sabbatai Zevi as a fraud were certainly relieved when he renounced Judaism to become a Muslim. To be sure, he and his followers believed they were integrating Judaism into their new Islamic identities. The leadership of normative Judaism did not agree, not at all. The rabbis and notables who attacked magical Judaism assumed that they possessed the right to excommunicate, which indeed was central to the "state within a state" arrangement. But what they sometimes achieved in the short run was unfortunate for their sustained power in communities. Gradually, the Jewish public became indifferent to the ban and indeed cynical toward the quarreling rabbis.

We learn this as we move forward to the 1750s, when a nasty dispute between two leading Jewish figures emerged. On one side was the newly appointed chief rabbi in the Triple Towns of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbeck, Jonathan Eibeschütz. In 1749, Eibeschütz was 64. As one of the most prominent scholars of his time, he had served as a preacher and rabbi in Hamburg, Metz, and Prague.[41] Born into a poor family, considered both brilliant and kind-hearted, he had been aided by the patronage of various Court Jews. During his Prague years, Eibeschütz enjoyed friendships with Christian intellectuals, worked as a government censor of Jewish texts, and eventually became the leading rabbinic judge in Prague. Because he was so learned and prominent, the charge that Eibeschütz really was a secret Sabbatean was explosive in Jewish circles at the time.

To understand the dispute we must distinguish between the "practical Kabbalah" and the more extensive and antinomian Sabbatean use of the Kabbalah.[42] For instance, Eibeschütz made amulets for pregnant women who believed such devices could keep them safe from illness. Yet, at least on the surface, as measured by his public behavior, Eibeschütz condemned the Kean legacy. For instance, in 1725 at Yom Kippur services in his synagogue in Prague, he "pronounced a ban and curse" on Sabbatai's followers.[43]

In 1749, when Eibeschütz was appointed chief rabbi of the Triple Towns of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbeck, Jacob Emden seethed with anger. He was convinced that the job properly belonged to him. Emden was the son of Zevi Ashkenazi, a prominent rabbinic figure in Hamburg and a

[41] See Pawel Maciejka, "The Jews' Entry into the Public Sphere – the Emden–Eibeschütz Controversy Reconsidered," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007), 135–54.

[42] I use the term "antinomian" according to the second definition of the word as "rejecting fixed moral laws" in the *Encarta Dictionary: English (North American)*.

[43] See Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatean Controversies* (New York, 1990), 181.

militant opponent of Sabbateanism. In 1749, Emden was 51. He made his living as a businessman, but he was also a prolific religious scholar, a publisher of Hebrew books, and conducted services in his own home. Emden must have been jealous of Eibeschütz, considering that he had long been frustrated in his desire to become the official rabbi of the three towns.[44] He was then in his third marriage, and was highly sensitive, quarrelsome and unhappy. Emden initiated the controversy with the new rabbi in February of 1751, at a Thursday morning service in his private synagogue. He declared that the author of an amulet which he had opened was definitely a follower of Sabbatai Zevi.[45] Although on this occasion Emden did not accuse Eibeschütz directly, it was well known that he had written that particular amulet. Eibeschütz contested the accusation, and, for the next decade, various personalities were opening amulets and debating about what was written on the tiny texts inside of them.

The conflict between the two men escalated, and at times each man's followers engaged in violence. In May of 1751, Emden fled to Amsterdam, afraid that Eibeschütz's followers would kill him. A year later, he returned to Altona, but the war of insults and street brawls continued to convulse the local Jewish community and beyond. After seven years of intense conflict, in 1756, Eibeschütz was re-elected as the rabbi of the Triple Towns. Eight years later he died, but Emden continued the battle by insinuations against his enemy's children.

It is difficult for contemporary scholars to interpret the truth of Emden's charges against Eibeschütz. The author of a recent volume on the theme concludes that "we cannot simply dismiss the entire corpus of testimonial literature" accusing Eibeschütz of Sabbatean beliefs "as a complete fabrication by rabbinic opponents."[46] In other words, some of Emden's charges were indeed plausible, or even correct to some degree.[47] Historians today do seem convinced that certain of Sabbatai's followers remained Jews, but practiced special rituals and held on to special beliefs, and that this sect lasted until the beginning of the nineteenth century.[48]

[44] See Jacob J. Schachter, "History and Memory of Self: The Autobiography of Rabbi Jacob Emden," in Elisheva Carlebach, John Efron, and David Meyers, eds., *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Josef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Hanover, NH, 1998), 428–52. For analysis of Emden's autobiography, see Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography*, 288–311.

[45] See Cohen, *Emden*, 113, and Schachter, "Memory of Self," 431.

[46] This is one conclusion made by Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*, 183.

[47] In the view of Cohen, *Emden*, 253, Eibeschütz was a kabbalist, but that in itself did not justify the attacks on him by Jacob Emden and others. Cohen distinguishes between kabbalists and Sabbateans, and argues that it was a "grievous misfortune" that the Sabbateans used the Kabbalah.

[48] This is the conclusion of Baer, *The Dönme*, 3.

Jacob Emden certainly could not go to his death with a feeling of victory against self-proclaimed Jewish messiahs. The chief object of his dismay in the years just before he died in 1773 was the fascinating and disturbing figure of Jacob Frank. During the middle years of the eighteenth century, Frank and his band of enthusiasts roamed between the Ottoman Empire, Poland, and the Czech lands, and eventually settled in Offenbach, in the Germanic lands. Moreover, the Frankists also roamed very widely between the three dominant faiths of Judaism, Islam, and Catholicism. Just how indebted Frank was to the Sabbatean movement and its legacy was contentious at the time, and remains so in contemporary scholarship.[49]

Frank was born in 1726 in Podolia, now Ukraine, into a family sympathetic to Sabbateanism. As a caravan merchant, he traveled to the Ottoman lands, and promoted himself as a leader of the *Dönmeh* in Salonika. At age 30, in 1756, in the Ottoman Empire, he became a Muslim. Two years later, in 1758, we pick up his trail in Iwanie, Poland, where the Polish crown had granted his entourage a refuge. During the late 1750s, Frank was repeatedly excommunicated by Jewish courts. A persistent charge was that the group practiced daring sexual acts, as a manifestation of their commitment to "redemption by sin." Polish Church officials were eager to use the Frankists, with their manifold critiques of traditional talmudic Judaism, as a foil to debate theology. Polish bishops organized two very public disputations, one in 1757 and another in 1759, between the Frankists and leading rabbis.[50] Because, during the second disputation, the Frankists claimed that Jews did use Christian blood in their rituals, at this juncture "the Frankists cut themselves off entirely from the Jewish community."[51]

After the disputation was over, Church officials were adamant that Frank and his followers become formally baptized. He and "hundreds" of his followers officially converted to become Catholics in Lemberg on November 28, 1759.[52] After the baptism, suspicions ran high that neither

[49] The account given by Heinrich Graetz is very extreme; see his *History of the Jews*, vol. V (Philadelphia, 1895; repr. 1967), 278–9. For an attempt to summarize how Scholem responded to Graetz, and a survey of contemporary scholarly thinking, see Matt Goldish, "The Relationship between Kabbalah, Sabbateanism, and Heresy," in Daniel Frank and Matt Goldish, eds., *Rabbinic Culture and its Critics: Jewish Authority, Dissent, and Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Times* (Detroit, 2008), 393–408.

[50] I have relied here on Hundert, *Poland–Lithuania*, 155–9.

[51] This is the conclusion of ibid., 157. For an alternative view entirely, see Arthur Mandel, *The Militant Messiah: Or the Flight from the Ghetto* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1979), 48. An excellent new volume is Pawel Maciejka, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement 1755–1816* (Philadelphia, 2011).

[52] Mandel, *Militant Messiah*, 65, notes that Frank had 30,000 followers in these years, but that 1,200 converted in Lemberg that summer. For detailed discussion, see Alexandr Kraushar, *Jacob Frank: The End to the Sabbataian Heresy* (Lanham, MD, 2001), 152–5.

Frank nor his followers were truly serious about adopting Catholic beliefs and rituals. As a punishment by the Catholic Church, in spite of their mass baptism, Frank and many of his followers were incarcerated in a monastery in Czestochowa for thirteen years. Inside the monastery, they enjoyed considerable freedom to conduct their syncretist rituals and build up a highly organized sectarian community. After the Russian Empire incorporated this region of Poland, the Frankists moved to Brno, in Moravia. There Jacob Frank established an idiosyncratic personal court. The final destination of the Frankist sect was in the German town of Offenbach. Frank died there in 1791, but his daughter Eva continued to lead the sect until her death.

We have seen that, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rabbinic Judaism had certainly taken a beating from the would-be Jewish messiahs. But in the Germanic lands, a century after Sabbatai Zevi's conversion in 1666, rabbis and traditional scholars certainly would have had reason to feel victorious. In southeastern Europe, the Hasidim were using kabbalistic sources and interpretation to create a very different version of charismatic magical Judaism. But the Hasidim found few followers in Prague, Vienna, or Berlin. In our region, Jewish intellectuals pondering the Jewish future were more concerned with diminishing the intensity of Judaism, and were rarely motivated to make Jewish practice more intense and more emotional. In the Germanic lands, as we move toward the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, the new challenge to the learned and observant tradition came from the Haskalah.

The dominant view for a long time was that a single individual, Moses Mendelssohn, was responsible for this hugely important movement.[53] In recent decades, a more textured analysis of small-scale shifts in behavior of Jews across the Germanic lands suggests that Mendelssohn and his followers were expressing and legitimizing this acculturation process.[54] However we evaluate the causal role of Mendelssohn, his biography fascinates. He arrived in Berlin from Dessau in 1743, when he was only 14. During his teens and early adulthood, he found tutors and educated himself in secular languages and subjects. He was employed as a tutor and subsequently as a bookkeeper for the wealthy Bernard family, who owned a

[53] For the traditional view, which credits Mendelssohn with the causation of the Haskalah, see Graetz, *History*, V, 730. The standard biography in English is Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Oxford, 1998).

[54] The most recent full-scale biography of Mendelssohn first appeared in French and is now in a German translation. See Dominique Bourel, *Moses Mendelssohn: la naissance du judaisme moderne* (Paris, 2004). For critiques of the view that Mendelssohn alone was responsible for the Haskalah, see Schochat, *Im Hilufei Tekufot*; in German translation, *Der Ursprung der jüdischen Aufklärung*. See also Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, 2009).

silk factory. Mendelssohn's mastery of the German language and his prominent works of political philosophy earned him the admiration, and indeed the friendship, of prominent Christian intellectuals in Berlin. His friends Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Friedrich Nicolai smoothed his path into literary clubs and social circles of enlightened Christian intellectuals. Two works written at the time reflect the influence of Mendelssohn. Gotthold Lessing's play *Nathan der Weise*, first performed in 1783 in Berlin, was a kind of literary memorial to his friend. And Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, a Prussian civil official, wrote a bold treatise endorsing Jewish emancipation, which appeared in 1781.[55]

With very good reasons, Mendelssohn was haunted by the fear that he might become another Baruch Spinoza. Spinoza had been banned as a heretic by the Amsterdam Jewish community back in 1655. Because he was an observant Jew, because of his standing in German society, and because he aided Jewish communities in distress, Mendelssohn was never excommunicated. Indeed, his balancing act was remarkable, considering that one of his critiques of normative Judaism was how religious authorities relied on coercion rather than persuasion to maintain traditional behavior. One of Mendelssohn's lasting contributions to the modernization of Jewry was the *Bi'ur*, a transliteration of the Hebrew Bible into German words spelled out using Hebrew characters. This version of the Bible provided Hebrew readers with a religiously acceptable way to learn the German language. Mendelssohn's version of the Hebrew Bible would play an important role in the spread of the Haskalah and the German language to generations of Jewish students in eastern Europe during the nineteenth century.

THE FALSE START AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

After Mendelssohn's death in 1786 a younger generation of *maskilim*, as the Jewish reformers were called in Hebrew, devoted themselves to creating innovative institutions to spread the message of the Haskalah. They raised funds and obtained permissions and recruited their fellow Jews to write for new journals of opinion, join reading societies, and send their children to maskilic schools. One of their enthusiasms was to renew the use of Hebrew

[55] For the text in English and additional essays, see Gotthold Lessing and Ronald Schechter, *Nathan the Wise: With Related Documents* (Boston, 2004). Dohm's treatise was entitled *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (Berlin, 1783; repr. Berlin, 1975). The English edition is *Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews* (Cincinnati, 1957).

as a literary language.[56] Those who opposed the Haskalah were worried that any reform of Judaism would open the door to more conversion out of the faith. Indeed, we do see a spike in conversion rates in the German lands during this century. In the 150 years between 1600 and 1750, the number of converts was somewhere near 500, although the methods of counting them are necessarily unscientific. But as we move into the nineteenth century, we see almost that many converts during the first decade of the century, and this was just in Berlin.[57] Moreover, the kinds of Jews choosing conversion were changing. As time moves forward, we see many more wealthy converts, replacing the itinerant marginal Jews who had become Christians in the previous centuries.

Becoming a Christian was a quick way to obtain equal civic rights without waiting for kings, princes, and Town Councils to emancipate the wider Jewish population. The frustration experienced by educated Jewish young men was considerable, because many positions they desired required Christian religious status. And Jewish women who found acceptance in Christian, and especially noble, high society were attracted to baptism as well. Because of the political fragmentation in central Europe, the process of granting civic emancipation proceeded in a most uneven manner. Moreover, although there definitely was a positive mood of reform at the time of the French Revolution, by the time the dust had settled after the Napoleonic Wars much of what was accomplished did not last into the new nineteenth century.

The towns and regions which came under French domination during Napoleonic France's expansion into central Europe adopted the emancipation program of the French National Assembly of 1791. Thus, the kingdom of Westphalia, Baden, and the Grand Duchy of Berg, political entities created by the French occupiers, granted extensive emancipation in the years immediately after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. Three years later, the town of Frankfurt am Main, now incorporated as the Grand Duchy of Frankfurt, passed extensive emancipatory legislation. And the state of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, which was not under French domination, granted a very expansive emancipation program in 1813.

It was Prussia that sponsored the most progressive legislation of the time. The Edict of Emancipation of March 1812 was celebrated by the local Jewish elites. They had argued that Jewish military service in the War of

[56] See David Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought: Orphans of Knowledge* (London, 2000), ch. 6; and Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2004). See also David Sorkin and Shmuel Feiner, *New Perspectives on Haskala* (London, 2001).

[57] For elaboration, see Hertz, *How Jews Became Germans*, 35, and 224, graph 3.

Liberation against France and generous Jewish philanthropy to the endangered Prussian state should be rewarded with greater civic rights. Unlike the emancipation in France in 1791, which awarded individual Jews equal rights all at once, the Prussian law promised eventual civic emancipation contingent upon the Jews modernizing their habits and religious practices. In this way, partial emancipation stimulated the reform of Jewish ritual practice.

Alas, after the political players who met for a year at the Congress of Vienna re-drew the map of central Europe following the rout of Napoleon, Jewish emancipation suffered setbacks from various directions. Bremen and Lübeck actually expelled their Jewish residents in 1816. The progressive Prussian law was not extended to the large territories that Prussia annexed after 1815, including important centers of Jewish population in the Rhineland. The Habsburg policy, so positive and forward-looking under Emperor Joseph II, was now retrenched and the number of Jews allowed to settle in Vienna remained small.

The problem for the Jews of our region in this era was not just that Jewish emancipation was identified with the detested French occupiers. At a deeper level, the process of resistance to French rule had tarnished the liberal universalism of the French approach to these matters. Liberal and conservative elites, sometimes even radicals as well, had become more nationalist. Their nationalism was all the more robust and deeply felt because no one single political unit could be identified as *the* German state. Increasingly, the real and the imaginary states of central Europe were seen by intellectuals as Christian in their ethos, a label often linked to "German." In time, this view of statehood would prove problematic for the emancipation project.

Forward-looking Jews understood the pact implied in the notion of gradual and partial emancipation. If Jews would modernize their prayer styles and eliminate what remained of the *kehillah* as a state within a state, further citizenship rights would be granted them. The richest family in Berlin, Jacob Herz Beer and his wife Amalia, worked alongside the banker Israel Jacobson to organize a reformed religious service, which immediately became very popular. Alas, shortly after 1812, state officials changed their perspective on the relationship between religious modernization and emancipation. Instead of the harmonious evolution of Jewish practice, the goal became to repress the emergent Reform Judaism and thereby drive more Jews to baptism. Traditional rabbis who were convinced that religious reform would be a bridge away from traditional Judaism altogether actually played a role in the closing down of the Beer Reform services in 1823. But to tell that story would take us too far forward in this historical landscape.

On this tour of Judaism in central Europe, we have come to know some disturbing personalities, movements, and events. Before the Haskalah, Jewish thinkers in the Germanic lands rarely experimented with innovative theologies or practices. They seldom chose to invent new practices that renewed Judaism with "paints drawn almost entirely from the palette of its own traditions."[58] Sabbateanism, Frankism, and the Hasidim of Ukraine were, in contrast, movements whose central ideas and texts belonged to the Jewish tradition.

The innovative contribution which did arise in the Germanic lands was the Haskalah. Rather than a reaction to Jewish debates about God, prayer, and practice, most observers, at the time and later, interpret the Haskalah as a mélange of Jewish and secular assumptions, practices, and values. Historians are still sifting the evidence necessary to verify and expand this point. But, however we interpret its origins, it is indisputable that the Haskalah was well suited to the gradual emancipation which was offered by the Germanic states during the nineteenth century. Because partial emancipation required proof of internal Jewish modernization, Reform and Liberal Judaism played very important functions in the expansion of civic rights.

Alas, the Haskalah proved too thin on the ground to nourish continued Jewish spiritual and cultural renewal inside central Europe. Neither the Hebrew revival nor the fragile academic field called *Wissenschaft des Judentums* managed to engage the wider constituency of German Jews during the nineteenth century. Over the decades, late ages of marriage, low fertility, and high conversion and intermarriage rates justified the accusation that the pattern emerging among Jews in Germany could with reason be termed "racial suicide."[59]

It is a truism by now that a vast gallery of thinkers and writers and scientists of Jewish origin contributed hugely to German and world culture. But rarely did their contributions include any Jewish ideas, symbols, or values. In contrast, their peers to the east were creating a lively range of Jewish paths to modernity, ranging from Yiddish socialism, to many types of Zionism, to a remarkable outpouring of novels, plays, and poetry. And so we end on a sorry note for Judaism in the Germanic lands. Gershon Scholem judged harshly when he argued that the Jews of our era were responsible for a "false start" on the long road to equality. He regretted that the price of civic emancipation and cultural assimilation

[58] Hundert, *Poland–Lithuania*, 119, describing the religious movements in eastern Europe.
[59] See Felix Theilhaber, *Der Untergang der deutschen Juden: Eine volkswirtschaftliche Studie* (Munich, 1911). For sage commentary, see John Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors in Fin-de-siècle Europe* (New Haven, 1994).

was very high, and that few truly Jewish values, practices, and folkways survived into the twentieth century. Between the lines of Scholem's analysis is the accusation that his ancestors had paid the price of emancipation with too much enthusiasm.

The long-term racial suicide which first began at the close of the era we have surveyed here made the Nazi assault all the more poignant and painful for Jews who enjoyed little authentic spiritual or cultural identity. Historians of the era will long be pondering whether or not it is fair to conclude that "the Jews of Germany, barricaded against reality, self-satisfied, gifted, went to their deaths, with the fury they aroused in the Germans imposing a death sentence on Jews everywhere."[60] But the terms of this harsh claim certainly are illuminated by the slow fading of Judaism in the German lands during these three centuries.

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[60] This quote is from Avram Burg's review of Ruvik Rosenthal, *Rehov Haprachim 22*, in the Israeli daily newspaper *Ha-Aretz* (June 13, 2003).

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CHAPTER 29

THE MAKING OF HABSBURG JEWRY IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

MICHAEL K. SILBER

At the beginning of the long eighteenth century that stretched from the final decades of the seventeenth century until the Congress of Vienna (1815), the ratio of the Jewish population of the Habsburg Monarchy to the great Jewish center in the Polish– Lithuanian Commonwealth was one to ten; by the end of this period it had risen to one to four. Over this long century, the Jews of "the lands in between," as the Monarchy has been called, came to be uniquely constituted in almost equal measure by eastern and central European Jews. While it was unrealistic to expect that its various components would rapidly meld into a unified whole, nevertheless, certain trends could be discerned during this period, drawing the diverse parts together to form a "Habsburg" Jewry: a shared sense of dynastic loyalty; then patriotic sentiments about the land and its inhabitants; and, eventually, even adumbrations of modern nationalism.

Styling the period from the last third of the seventeenth century until the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 as "the long eighteenth century" suits well the history of Habsburg Jewry. This period exhibited remarkable continuities that in certain spheres could even be extended to the mid nineteenth century. But it also witnessed sharp breaks with the past, calling for a periodization that divides the century and a half into two almost equal halves: a "late" early modern phase, and a full-fledged modern one. Conveniently, the two were separated by the Seven Years' War (1756–63), which ushered in the beginnings of a shift discernable in spheres as varied as politics, economy, society, culture, and religion. These transitional years signaled the decline of the *Pietas Austriaca*, the era of the Baroque Counter-Reformation, and witnessed the emergence of the modern state. But it was the enlightened absolutist regime of the Emperor Joseph II some two decades later that – for Habsburg Jewry and, in a sense, for European Jewry in general – ushered in a qualitatively new, modern era.

Often viewed as lagging behind western – in particular, German – Jewry, the Jews of the Monarchy, even in backwater Galicia, were suddenly thrust into the forefront of Jewish modernization during the brief reign of

Joseph II (1780–90). On the eve of the French Revolution, the Emperor's reforms had brought about changes in the legal status and the culture of Habsburg Jewry that were well in advance of any other country in Europe, including France and Prussia, the seedbed of the Berlin Haskalah. The Europe-wide warfare that ensued over the next quarter of a century, if it did not altogether put an end to this transformation, then it at least brought about its suspension for the time being.

POPULATION, MIGRATION, SETTLEMENT, ECONOMY

During the long eighteenth century, the Habsburg Monarchy emerged as a major European power. This was a period of almost incessant warfare from which the Monarchy emerged with its territories vastly augmented and its population considerably enlarged. At the outset of the reign of Emperor Leopold I (1658–1705), the bulk of his possessions, the so-called German Hereditary Lands and the lands of the kingdom of Bohemia, were located firmly within the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire, in fact comprising its largest component. Only the northern rump of what was left under Habsburg control of the Kingdom of Hungary lay beyond the borders of the Empire. Its population numbered about 3 million; its total area constituted about 5,000 Austrian square miles.[1]

By 1815, the Habsburg Monarchy had been greatly transformed by four great territorial acquisitions. To the east, after having successfully withstood the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683, Leopold I went on the offensive and by the end of the century, after a bloody thirteen-year war, had reconquered large parts of Hungary that had been occupied by the Ottomans for over a century and a half. Scarcely had peace been concluded, with the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, when again a Europe-wide war broke out when the Spanish line of the Habsburgs came to an end, setting off the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–13). At its conclusion, the Monarchy under Emperor Karl VI (r. 1711–40), Leopold's son, gained considerable territory: to the west, the Spanish – henceforth Austrian – Netherlands (Belgium), and to the south, large parts of the Italian peninsula. As a result of the War of Polish Succession (1733–38), Karl consolidated his Italian possessions in Lombardy (the Duchies of Milan and Mantua), while his son-in-law, Francis Stephen, who had been compelled to cede the Duchy of Lorraine, was indemnified in 1737

[1] P. G. M. Dickson, *Finance and Government under Maria Theresa, 1740–1780*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1987), and Charles W. Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618–1815* (Cambridge, 2000).

with the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. When at the turn of the century the lands of the Venetian Republic were acquired in exchange for Belgium, Austria finally came to rule over a contiguous northern Italy. The fourth great acquisition was to the north, this time gained without having to wage a bloody war. The Empress Maria Theresa (r. 1740–80) was awarded what became the kingdom of Galicia by the First Polish Partition of 1772, adding to it Bukowina in 1775, gained from the Moldavian Principality then under Ottoman auspices. The Monarchy suffered one great defeat when it lost most of the rich province of Silesia to Prussia in 1742 during the War of Austrian Succession (1741–5).

In the span of a century and a half, the Monarchy's population had multiplied more than sevenfold. Already by the mid-1780s it had over 23 million inhabitants, while its area more than doubled; by 1815, with the exchange of Belgium for the Venetian Republic during the French Wars, the size of its territories was even greater.

The Jews of the Monarchy underwent a similar demographic transformation. In the wake of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), the Jewish population was reduced to about 30,000 souls, mostly concentrated in the lands of the Bohemian crown (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia), but some also lived in Lower Austria, and a negligible number in Royal Hungary (the northern rump of the kingdom that remained under Habsburg rule). By the mid-1780s, when somewhat reliable censuses were held, roughly 350,000 Jews (perhaps more, since the Galician numbers were notoriously unreliable) were registered within the Habsburg lands. While a considerable part of this tenfold growth can be attributed to the acquisition of Galicia, the rest must be ascribed to natural increase.

But the growth of the Jewish population was unevenly distributed among the lands of the Monarchy. It is clear that the rise in the Jewish population of Bohemia, Moravia, and later Galicia was more modest than the pace called for by their natural increase. On the other hand, the Jewish population of Hungary grew by leaps and bounds: 12,000 were recorded in the Jewish census of 1735 – and even of these only 4,000 had been born in the country – while the general census of 1787 registered 83,000, a rate of increase unmatched by any other Jewry in Europe. By 1830, the Jewish population of Hungary had drawn even with that of Galicia, both approaching the quarter of a million mark.[2]

We are justified in viewing the Monarchy in the eighteenth century as a more or less closed demographic unit with little in-migration from other countries. Consequently, Hungary's gain can be attributed largely

[2] Michael K. Silber, "Hungary, until 1918," in Gershon Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2 vols. (New Haven, 2008), 770–82.

Figure 29.1 The Jews of the Habsburg Empire: late eighteenth century. *Source*: Evyatar Friesel, *Atlas of Modern Jewish History* (New York, 1990), [34–5]. Map composed by Michael K. Silber.

to internal Jewish migration within the Habsburg possessions. By extrapolating the rate of natural increase, we can estimate the size of migration from Moravia and the west over the long eighteenth century as being at about 30,000 to 35,000 Jews, and from Galicia from the end of the 1760s

onward another 25,000.[3] Undoubtedly, the limitations placed on the number of Jewish families in the Bohemian crownlands by the notorious Familiants Laws of 1726 and 1727 – 8,541 for Bohemia, 5,106 for Moravia, and 119 for Silesia – played a role, but the economic pull was no less important than the discriminatory push as can be seen by the earlier waves of migration.[4] The unrest in Poland on the eve of its first partition, the economic disruption as a consequence of the partitions and cutting Galicia off from its markets to the north, and later Joseph II's harsh decrees expelling Jews from the villages, all contributed to the Hungarian migration. It should also be kept in mind that Galicia, especially its eastern half, had the highest concentration of Jews in Europe, contributing to a constant flow of emigration not only to northeast Hungary, but also to the Romanian principalities and southern Russia.[5]

Jews were not spread uniformly over this sprawling empire. The pattern of Jewish settlement was primarily determined by legal status, and this varied from province to province, each with its own particular laws or constitution.[6] While Jews enjoyed the royal privilege (*Judenschutz*) to settle and trade in some lands of the Monarchy, many other provinces enjoyed the privilege of not tolerating Jews at all within their precincts. These included, with minor exceptions, all the German lands after the expulsion of Jews from Vienna in 1670 (Upper and Lower Austria, Tyrol, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Vorarlberg, and Further Austria). In the lands of the Hungarian crown, they were prohibited from settling in the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia, as well as the Military Border, while in the Principality of Transylvania and the Banat in southern Hungary they were restricted to one town. Other regions that excluded Jews were the mining counties in the north of Hungary and the privileged Jász-Kún and Hajdu regions on the Great Hungarian Plain.

Legal status also had an impact on the urban–rural distribution of the Jewish population. There were three primary designations of types of settlement: the royal free city (*Stadt, civitas*) enjoying municipal autonomy; the market town (*Marktfleck, oppidum*); and the village (*Dorf, pagus*) – the last two privately owned by the nobility, the Church, or the royal treasury. Almost all of the so-called royal free cities – twenty-seven in

[3] See the tables in Ferdinand Seibt, ed., *Die Juden in den böhmischen Ländern* (Munich, 1983), 325.

[4] Ivo Cerman, "Familiants Laws," in *YEJEE.*

[5] The 1764 census of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth officially registered close to 600,000 Jews in 58 *województwa* ("provinces"). With more than 100,000 Jews, the *województwo* of Rus, which constituted most of eastern Galicia after 1772, was by far the most populous.

[6] Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, "Differences of Estates within pre-Emancipation Jewry," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 5 (1954), 156–66; 6 (1955), 35–49.

Bohemia, six in Moravia, fifty-two in Hungary, and a considerable number in Galicia – exercised their privilege not to tolerate Jews, who were compelled to settle on the outskirts of these cities in market towns (Obuda is a good example) or suburbs (Eisenstadt, Pressburg) owned by the aristocracy. With the exception of Prague, where close to a quarter of Bohemian Jewry lived, the number of Jews in the royal free cities was negligible.

The market town, whose size could range between 2,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, was the ideal type of Jewish settlement, fulfilling a typical mediating role between village and city. In Moravia, where Jews were prohibited from settling in villages and excluded from the royal free cities, almost its entire Jewry was concentrated in 52 market towns. In the last third of the eighteenth century, about 75 percent of the Jews in Galicia, 35 percent in Bohemia (with about 20 percent more living in Prague), and 40 percent in Hungary lived in such towns. With the high concentration of wealth and land in the Bohemian crown lands, most of these towns were in the possession of a few aristocratic magnates. Even before the reconquest of Hungary, Jews expelled from Lower Austria and Vienna began to settle in market towns along the Hungarian border belonging to aristocrats like Esterházy, Batthyány, and Pálffy.

Beside the impressive migration to Hungary, the long eighteenth century also witnessed considerable migration to villages where this was permissible (again excepting Moravia, where only 2 percent or so lived outside the towns). A striking evidence of this is the rise, then decline, of Prague's Jewish population, both in absolute numbers and in its share of Bohemian Jewry. In 1638, 7,815 Jews were recorded in Prague; in 1712, 11,517; in 1740, possibly over 14,000; while in 1789 only 8,215.[7] Proportionately, Prague dropped from having more than one-third to less than one-quarter of Bohemian Jewry during these decades. During the reign of Joseph II, 35 percent of Jewry in Bohemia lived in rural areas, roughly 25 percent in Galicia, while as many as 60 percent in Hungary, with its 83,000 Jews. This last detail is noteworthy: since, as we have seen, Hungary experienced a constant flow of Jewish immigrants primarily from Moravia and Galicia, provinces with either insignificant or relatively small village populations, it meant that Jews were moving from lands with robust communal life – 45 percent of Galician and 75 percent of Moravian Jewry lived in towns with concentrations of more than 500 Jews – to isolated rural locations, with mostly a few Jewish families to a village.

Within market towns, and even villages, further discriminatory legislation determined Jewish residence. This was particularly true of Bohemia and Moravia, where in addition to the Familiants Laws limiting the number of Jewish families in various locations, decrees were issued between 1727 and

[7] See the rich statistical table in Wilfried Brosche, "Das Ghetto von Prag," in Seibt, ed., *Die Juden in den böhmischen Ländern*, 117–19.

1731 relocating Jewish domiciles and segregating them from Christian ones. The authorities were especially concerned to ensure that no Jewish house was in close proximity to a church and could disturb worship, or even had a view from a window from which religious processions could be mocked.[8] These Jewish quarters were true ghettos, and were especially characteristic of Moravia where Jews – but also Christians – were ordered to relocate and exchange houses in fifty-four localities in order to produce clear-cut division between the Christian town and the *Judengasse* ("Jewish street").[9] Outside the Bohemian crown lands, there were a few communities that also had similar Jewish ghettos, such as Eisenstadt, whose Jewish quarter was set off by a chain, or the Pressburg *Judengasse* whose heavy gates were to provide crucial defense against the riots of 1848. But in general, in Hungary and Galicia, with few exceptions – such as the prohibition of Jewish dwellings in two quarters of Lemberg at the turn of the century – no such residential discrimination obtained within permitted settlements.

Jews played an important economic role in the backward economy of the Habsburg lands, yet occupational restrictions were just as onerous as residential ones. Jews could not own land (not even the rustical land of the serfs) and were excluded from the merchant and craft guilds. Jews did engage in a limited number of crafts, and at times, as in Prague, they also formed their own guild associations. While Jews managed to circumvent some of the residential and occupational limitations, these discriminatory measures had an undeniable effect on the occupational structure of Habsburg Jewry. A considerable sector was engaged as either village *arendars* – who leased such noble monopolies as distilleries, inns and mills – or itinerant traders, the so-called *Pinkeljuden* who plied their wares in the countryside carrying a sack on their backs. The distribution of the occupations in Bohemia, Hungary, and Galicia was strikingly similar: about half of the Jewish population engaged in trade, mostly petty trade; about a fifth in crafts; and a third in *arenda* in Hungary and Galicia, though about half as much in Bohemia where various miscellaneous economic endeavors completed the profile.[10]

[8] František Roubík, "Die Judensiedlungen in Böhmen auf den Ortsplänen vom Jahre 1727," *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Čechoslovakischen Republik [JGGJČR]* 3 (1931), 283–306, here 292, 298.

[9] Willibald Müller, "Konskription und Separierung der Judenschaft im Jahre 1727," in Müller, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der mähr. Judenschaft im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Olmütz, 1903), 33–72. See Michael L. Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution: The Jews of Moravia in the Age of Emancipation* (Stanford, 2011), 29–30.

[10] Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, "Economic History of Jews in Non-metropolitan Bohemia in the 17th and 18th Centuries" [Hebrew], *Zion* 12 (1947), S. 160–89; Jirí Woitsch and František Bahenský, eds., *Etnografický atlas Cech, Moravy a Slezska,* vol. V: *Zidovske*

In Hungary, the dramatic increase of the Jewish population brought a much-needed infusion into the economy. In the countryside, as peddlers, general store owners, innkeepers, Jews came to displace the traditional so-called Greek traders. In the market towns, as noted, they played a key economic role mediating between the cities and the villages.

The dynamic in the economic sphere was noticeable also in the very upper reaches of Jewish society. In light of the weakness of the Habsburg state, the financial and entrepreneurial activities of Court Jews in Vienna, such as Samuel Oppenheimer and Samson Wertheimer, and their wide network of Jewish agents were essential in waging the ongoing wars against the Ottomans in the east and the French in the west at the end of the seventeenth century and again at the beginning of the eighteenth. Their network of Jewish military subcontractors, reaching down to the lowest traders, supplied the blankets, provisions, military arms and supplies, draft oxen for hauling cannons and wagons, cattle for meat, and horses for the cavalry.[11] While the relative importance of the role of Viennese Court Jews declined toward the middle of the century, the constant years of warfare, especially the Seven Years' War, provided entrepreneurial opportunities for the Wetzlar, Arnstein, and Eskeles families as army purveyors and bankers. Leasing the state tobacco monopoly also became a Jewish niche, beginning with Diego d'Aguilar in the 1730s and 1740s, and then a consortium formed by the Hönig family in the second half of the century to farm the tobacco lease of the Bohemian lands. Unlike d'Aguilar, the Hönigs succeeded in having Jews subcontract the lease, thus providing a new livelihood for hundreds if not thousands of Jews in the Bohemian countryside.[12] Jews were allowed to enter the Gremium of privileged wholesale merchants in 1782, and the quarter of a century of the French and Napoleonic era again brought a new generation of army contractors and wholesale buyers into prominence,

obyvatelstvo v Cechách v letech 1792–1794 (Prague, 2007); Raphael Mahler, *Yidn in amolikn Poyln in likht fun tzifern*, 2 vols. (Warsaw, 1958); Michael K. Silber, "A Jewish Minority in a Backward Economy: An Introduction," in Silber, ed., *Jews in the Hungarian Economy, 1760–1945* (Jerusalem, 1992), 3–22; and Erzsébet Mislovics, "Demographic and Socio-Economic History of Hungarian Jews, 1700–1830" [Hungarian] (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2008), 150–238.

[11] Péter Hanák, "Jews and the Modernization of Commerce in Hungary, 1760–1848," in Silber, ed., *Jews in the Hungarian Economy*, 23–39.

[12] Michael Hainisch, "Das österreichische Tabakmonopol im 18. Jahrhundert," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 8 (1910), 394–444; Louise Hecht, "Von jüdischen Tabakbaronen und Trafikanten," *Brücken – Germanistisches Jahrbuch* 18 (2010), 203–23. Woitsch and Bahenský, eds., *Etnografický atlas*, map 12 on Jews engaged in tobacco trade in Bohemia in the 1790s, provides a striking visual illustration of the spread of this new economic endeavor.

giving rise to a new economic elite invested in textile factories, especially in Bohemia.[13] Their networks spread throughout the land and also brought about a measure of trickle-down prosperity, though great disparities in income and wealth obtained between the elites in Vienna and Prague and even mid-range merchants, not to mention the overwhelming mass of poor peddlers and *arendars*. Eventually, the cost of the incessant warfare proved devastating to state finances. In 1811, Austria declared bankruptcy and initiated a sharp devaluation that overnight wiped out great and modest fortunes. The Wehle family "went to bed worth one hundred thousand Gulden and woke up worth only twenty thousand."[14] Only toward the end of the 1820s would the Habsburg economy recover and a new era of capitalism take off. Nevertheless, most of the occupational and residential restrictions, as well as the special Jewish taxes, continued up to the 1840s, and some even up to 1860, despite a brief hiatus during the short-lived reforms of Joseph II in the 1780s.

COMMUNITY AND SUPER-COMMUNITY

It is in the market towns throughout the Monarchy that Jews were commonly issued charters or privileges by the aristocracy in the late seventeenth century and early part of the eighteenth century, ensuring the Jewish right to settle on their lands, to engage in trade, and to enjoy a measure of religious freedom and communal autonomy. However, toward the end of the eighteenth century, the grant of these privileges in Hungary's newly constituted communities became less common, perhaps even superfluous, though older ones were regularly renewed up until 1848 whenever a new lord succeeded to the domain.[15] The privileges were of a collective

[13] Herman Freudenberger, *Lost Momentum: Austrian Economic Development 1750s–1830s* (Vienna, 2003), 167–205.

[14] Josephine Goldmark, *Pilgrims of '48* (New Haven, 1930), 176.

[15] The 1748 privilege issued for the Jews of Pápa in Hungary was renewed without change by the Counts Esterházy in 1755, 1801, and 1829. See *Magyar Zsidó Szemle [MZsSz]* 2 (1882), 623–4. The *privilegium* for Mattersdorf was first issued in 1694 and revised in 1800, as the preamble states, because some points were "under the present circumstances no longer applicable." It remained valid at least until 1833. It is remarkable that, despite the preamble, no meaningful change is discernable over close to a century and a half. Fritz P. Hodik, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mattersdorfer Judengemeinde im 18. und in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Eisenstadt, 1975), 43–54, places both texts side by side. Many of the privileges collected by Jacob Goldberg, ed., *Jewish Privileges in the Polish Commonwealth: Charters of Rights Granted to Jewish Communities in Poland–Lithuania in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1985–2001), remained relevant in Galicia after its annexation.

nature, granting Jews the right to organize as a separate legal corporation, but individual charters were not unknown, such as those of the handful of Court Jews in Vienna at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries who were permitted residence and trade in the capital for a set period, but lived constantly with the threat that extensions could be denied. In fact, Viennese Jewry as a collective first constituted itself as a community only in the wake of the 1848 revolution.[16] It should also be recalled that, while the market towns were the loci of rich Jewish communal associations, Jews who lived in villages were deprived of even the most basic institutions such as a synagogue, and made do with an occasional visit to the town, usually during the holidays. A quorum could be assembled on the Sabbath when Jews from various villages came together for prayers; the wealthier villagers could also hire a tutor for their offspring. But, in general, village life was characterized by the poverty of its Jewish life: the *Dorfjuden* or *yishuvniks* were often mocked as ignorant bumpkins.

Besides the *privilegium*, which defined relations between the lord and the Jews on his estate, the self-regulating internal affairs of the community were set out in its *takkanot*, often translated for the benefit of the authorities as its *Polizeiordnung*. These statutes related to the administration of the community, but often would also seek to curb deviant behavior such as gambling, or frequenting theatres and comedies, as well as cafés run by non-Jews. Social discipline aimed at preserving modesty, sumptuary regulations, and even statutes stating the length of the beard were issued. Alongside the *kehillah* with its many religious, administrative, judicial, and educational activities, many of the larger communities also had a number of other associations, chief among them the *ḥevra kadisha* ("burial society"), which in time came to take on charitable functions and caring for the sick as well. Associated with the *ḥevrot* were the enameled glass ceremonial beakers that, along with the illustrated *pinkasim*, and even the 1773 multi-paneled group portrait of the Prague *ḥevra*, testified to a unique visual culture in these lands. Nearly a dozen artists and illustrators flourished in Vienna, Bohemia, Moravia, and western Hungary during the long eighteenth century.[17]

[16] David Kaufmann, *Samson Wertheimer* (Vienna, 1888), and Max Grunwald, *Samuel Oppenheimer und sein Kreis* (Vienna, 1913). For the 1723 list of the dozen Jews in Vienna who enjoyed individual privileges, see A. F. Přibram, ed., *Urkunden und Akten zur Geschichte der Juden in Wien*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1918), I, 312. Biographies of the Viennese Court Jews can be found in the incomparable Bernard Wachstein, *Die Inschriften des Alten Judenfriedhofes in Wien*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1917).

[17] Vivian B. Mann, Richard I. Cohen, and Fritz Backhaus, eds., *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power 1600–1800* (Munich, 1996), 118.

One more institution that especially flourished in the Habsburg lands during the long eighteenth century was the *yeshiva*. The once-thriving academies in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth had all but disappeared during these years,[18] and the center of gravity of the *yeshivot* had shifted to central Europe, to the Habsburg lands and a handful of large communities farther west. But it was Prague, above all, which attracted the largest number of students from all over Europe to attend its various *yeshivot* and to hear the lectures of such charismatic academy-heads as Abraham Broda, Jonathan Eibeschütz, and Ezekiel Landau.[19] Important *yeshivot* could also be found throughout the Monarchy in the mid-sized communities, especially in Moravia, but Kolin (Bohemia) and Pressburg (Hungary) also had outstanding academies at various times. At the end of our period, around 1815, when the *yeshiva* had all but disappeared in Germany and had begun to decline in Prague, and in far-off Lithuania the Volozhin *yeshiva* was still in its infancy, it was Pressburg that rose to pre-eminence during the incumbency of Moses Sofer (r. 1806–39) as the largest and most important *yeshiva* in Europe.[20]

In general, the Jews in the Habsburg lands possessed a type of communal autonomy that was little different from that enjoyed by Jews in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. One can even argue that, in practice, communal autonomy might have functioned even better in the Monarchy, if we take into account that magnate interference and abuses were kept in check by a much stronger state intent on preserving its own imperial interests and maintaining a rule of law that was often much weaker in the Commonwealth.[21] Striking evidence of the strength of communal autonomy in the Habsburg lands is the fact that, when the corporate character of the traditional community was dismantled throughout Europe by the mid nineteenth century, only in Moravia (and two communities in Hungary: Eisenstadt and Mattersdorf) were the *kehillot*

[18] Selig Margolios, "Woe, Yeshivas Have Been Eliminated in Poland!" introduction to Margolios, *Hiburie Liqutim* (Venice, 1714/15).

[19] On foreign students in Prague *yeshivot*, see František Roubík, "Zur Geschichte der Juden in Böhmen in der ersten Hälfte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts," *JGGJČR* 6 (1934), 295–322, esp. 300, 313–20.

[20] Michael K. Silber, "'There Are No Yeshivot in Our Country – For Several Good Reasons': Between Hasidim and Mitnagdim in Hungary" [Hebrew], in Emanuel Etkes, David Asaf, Israel Bartal, and Joseph Dan, eds., *Be-Ma'agalei Hasidim: Qovetz Mehqrarim le-Zikhro Shel Professor Mordekhai Wilensky* (Jerusalem, 1999), 75–108.

[21] "The rabbis of Little Poland whose foolish ways are to buy themselves rabbinates . . . [in] Greater Poland we fear . . . that a rabbi will be appointed in our community by the lord for love of money": Letter of the Elders of Lissa in "From the Archives of Frankfurt am Main concerning its Rabbinate, 1759" [Hebrew], *Tzfunot* 8 (1990), 105–8, here 107.

transformed into not only religious communities, but also "political Jewish communities" – state-recognized self-governing Jewish municipalities.[22]

The super-communal Council of the Land in Moravia, too, "bore close resemblance – although on a much smaller scale – to the Council of the Four Lands in Poland (and the Council of the Land of Lithuania)."[23] Interestingly enough, when the state first intervened in the administration of the communities during the reign of Maria Theresa, abolishing Jewish autonomy was not on the agenda. The Moravian *General-Polizei-Prozess- und Kommerzialordnung* issued in 1754, for example, more or less reconfirmed the super-*kehillah* autonomy of Moravian Jewry. The Jewish courts were to continue to function in suits between two Jews in the first instance. Instead of abolishing the Jewish autonomous organization, Maria Theresa preferred to retain and co-opt it as an ancillary bureaucratic body. In the case of Galician Jewry, she went even further. In the absence of a super-*kehillah* organization, the Council of Four Lands having been abolished in the Commonwealth during the previous decade, Maria Theresa set one up in 1776: a central Directory along Moravian lines. Although its functions were primarily those of a tax-collecting body, the chief rabbi who was appointed as its head had extensive powers. Jurisdiction of the rabbinic courts on the community level was left intact and the exercise of the ban by the Jewish authorities was still permitted by these two most important pieces of Theresian legislation regulating Jewish affairs.[24]

An additional super-communal institution in the Habsburg lands that was not found in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was the type of rabbi who exercised centralized, hierarchical power over substantial subordinate communities in an entire land, as did incumbents of the chief rabbinate in Moravia, Bohemia, briefly Hungary, and later Galicia.[25]

[22] Emil Goldmann, "Die politische Judengemeinden in Mähren," *Zeitschrift für Volkswirtschaft, Socialpolitik und Verwaltung* 17 (1898), 557–95, and Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 331–2.

[23] Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 22, and see the introduction to Israel Halpern, ed., *Taqanot Medinat Mehrin, 1650–1748* (Jerusalem, 1951), 9–16. An even smaller super-communal organization obtained in western Hungary: Bernhard Wachstein, ed., *Urkunden und Akten zur Geschichte der Juden in Eisenstadt und den Siebengemeinden* (Vienna, 1926), 553–711. On super-communal organizations in general, see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. and afterword Bernard Dov Cooperman (New York, 1993), 103–12.

[24] See §30 of the 1754 Moravian, and II §13 of the 1776 Galician regulations, in Müller, *Urkundliche Beiträge*, 81–102, and *Edicta et Mandata* (Leopoli, 1776), esp. 100. On the central Directory, see Abraham Jacob Brawer, *Galicia ve-Yehudeiha* (Jerusalem, 1965), pp. 178–86.

[25] See the classic study by Leopold Löw, "Das mährische Landesrabbinat," in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, 5 vols. (Szeged, 1890), II, 165–218; Sándor Büchler, "Az országos

All this should make one skeptical of recent typologies that seek to contrast east and west, the collective privileges enjoyed by Jews in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth versus personal ones in the Holy Roman Empire.[26] They overlook the fact that, at least until mid eighteenth century, the majority of the Empire's Jews were to be found in the Habsburg kingdom of Bohemia, and that these were constituted as *collective* corporate entities exercising considerable self-governance on both local and statewide levels.[27]

RELIGIOUS CHANGE: KABBALAH AND HALAKHAH

Let us now address the changes that began to become noticeable in the religious sphere after the Seven Years' War. First, a subtle but far-reaching change took place in what can be called the soteriology of Judaism, in particular in the demand that knowledge and study of the Kabbalah were essential for the soul's salvation. Such a demand was a relatively new development that took off toward the middle of the seventeenth century and peaked in the mid eighteenth century. The 1770/1 testament of Leib Oppenheim, the rabbi of Freistadtl/Galgoc in Hungary, reflects this sentiment: although one should devote oneself to the study of Talmud, "he should also set aside time for the study of Kabbalah, the secrets of the Torah. For whoever does not see this in this world will not merit to see the hidden light vouchsafed for the righteous in the eternal life of the world to come, and will not enter into the precincts of the Holy One."[28] This was

főrabbi hivatal Magyarországon" [The Office of the Chief Rabbinate in Hungary], *IMIT Évkönyv* (1896), 271–86; Tobias Jakobovits, "Das Prager und Böhmische Landesrabbinat Ende des siebzehnten und Anfang des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts," *JGGJČR* 5 (1933), 79–136; Joshua Z. Teplitsky, "Between Court Jew and Jewish Court: David Oppenheim, the Prague Rabbinate, and Eighteenth-century Jewish Political Culture" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2012).

[26] This has been argued by Adam Teller, "Telling the Difference: Some Comparative Perspectives on the Jews' Legal Status in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Holy Roman Empire," *Polin* 22 (2009), 109–41, and David J. Sorkin, "Beyond the East–West Divide: Rethinking the Narrative of the Jews' Political Status in Europe, 1600–1750," *Jewish History* 24, 3–4 (2010), 247–56. Both have ignored the preponderant role of the kingdom of Bohemia and its Jews *within* the Holy Roman Empire, and their extensive collective privileges.

[27] While Jewish statistics for the Holy Roman Empire (the Reich) are notoriously difficult to ascertain, it is clear, however, that the Jews of the Bohemian crownlands formed the majority of its Jewish population until the mid eighteenth century. For some estimates: Jacob Toury, *Qavim le-Heqer Kenisat ha-Yehudim le-Haim ha-Ezrahiim be-Germaniah* (Tel Aviv, 1972), 11; Raphael Mahler, *Divrei Yemei Yisrael: Dorot Aharonim*, vol. I, book 2 (Merhavya, 1954), 14.

[28] Leib Oppenheim, *Derekh Olam ha-Nitzhii'* (Prague, 1807), fol. 14b.

exactly the position that Ezekiel Landau, the rabbi of Prague and the preeminent halakhic authority of the time, came vigorously to oppose. More than anyone else, he most embodied the retreat from the Kabbalah, negating its soteriological pretensions. His views were well known in the past on the basis of his published works and ascribed to the allegation that the Kabbalah was tainted by Sabbatean heresy.[29]

Sabbateanism indeed flourished in the Bohemian lands. News of Sabbatai Zevi had been greeted with joy in Vienna and Prague in 1666. It was reported from Vienna that several Jews had asked the imperial court for permission to depart for Palestine because their messiah had arrived. In order to insult the Jews during the Mardi Gras carnival in Prague, nobles organized a mock parade of the messiah: "The Messiah read from a book: Follow after me! A trumpet has blown; some of the cavaliers spoke Hebrew." In Buda, the grandfather of the famous heresy hunter Jacob Emden "condemned to death a Jew because he refused to pray a blessing for Sabbatai Zevi. He ruled that this person was a rebel against the royal House of David and declared his life forfeit."[30] Throughout the eighteenth century, Prossnitz and Holleschau in Moravia, Prague and Kolin in Bohemia, Rechnitz and Stampfen in Hungary were known to harbor nests of crypto-Sabbateans. The 1750s proved a turning point in the history of the Sabbatean movement. In the east, in what was soon to become eastern Galicia, Jacob Frank had gathered hundreds of followers captivated by his personality and his own radical brand of Sabbatean teachings. It was an episode that culminated in the mass conversion of some 600 men, women, and children to Roman Catholicism in Lwow in 1759 and 1760. Later, Frank took up domicile in Brno, Moravia, and was supported by small conventicles of so-called believers (*ma'aminim*) in the Bohemian lands, who still continued to adhere outwardly to normative Judaism. Many of these Bohemian Sabbateans had taken part earlier during the 1750s in the prolonged and no-holds-barred controversy that rent the rabbinic world apart, focused on the charismatic rabbi Jonathan Eibeschütz, considered the most brilliant talmudic mind of his time, but suspected of having composed sacrilegious amulets and a kabbalistic manuscript tainted with the worst type of Sabbatean heresy.[31]

[29] See Landau's commentary on Berakhot 28b in his *Hidushei ha-Tzlach*, as well as his sermon of Shabbath ha-Gadol of 1782.

[30] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, 1973).

[31] Of the extensive literature on both these episodes, I refer only to Gershom Scholem, "A Frankist Document from Prague," in *Salo W. Baron Jubilee Volume*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1975), II, 787–814; Pawel Maciejko, *Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816* (Philadelphia, 2011); *And I Came This Day unto the Fountain by R. Jonathan Eibeschütz*, critically edited and introduced by Pawel Maciejko, with additional studies by Noam Lefler, Jonatan Benarroch, and Shai Alleson Gerberg (Los Angeles, 2014).

Thus, Landau had good reason to oppose the Kabbalah in light of its association with Sabbateanism. However, a censored and unpublished section of a key sermon delivered in the autumn of 1770 has recently come to light, which leaves no room for doubt that he condemned the Kabbalah *per se*, not only for its association with Sabbatean abuse.[32] If Sabbateanism, with its *ma'aminim* and the saliency it accorded to credo, can be seen as a form of confessionalization in Judaism, then Landau's counter-move to mute religious speculation by stressing the sufficiency of praxis can be conceived of as a form of de-confessionalization. Interestingly, this coincided with Moses Mendelssohn's similar emphasis on ritual performance and the de-dogmatization of Judaism.

Of course, within a generation, young scholars affiliated with the growing Hasidic movement in Galicia, such as Ezekiel Paneth and Zvi Elimeleh of Dynow, lamented the neglect of Kabbalah and sought once again to reinstate it to its rightful place, blaming authorities like Landau for the sorry state Judaism was in.[33] But the damage, at least in central Europe, was done. When a German synod held in 1836 raised the question "Is the Kabbalah deemed tradition?" the majority voted "no" – it exercised no binding influence: "On this occasion it was also noted that the high court in Prague had expressly declared that no one should consult the Kabbalah."[34] Whether this provides sufficient explanation for why Hasidism, uniquely of all religious movements in early modern Judaism, was contained as a regional phenomenon (just consider, by contrast, the cosmopolitan nature of Sabbateanism) that could not breach the borders separating the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth from the Holy Roman Empire still remains to be explored.

The rapid retreat from Kabbalah is one of the most noteworthy religious phenomena of this period. Did it reflect a growing rationalization, a disenchantment of the world, an Enlightenment *Zeitgeist*? Writing in the 1790s at the other end of the Monarchy in Galicia, Dov Ber Birkenthal of Bolechow recalled the pervasive ambience of enthusiasm in his youth, a craze for the Kabbalah and neglect of the Talmud. Phenomena such as

[32] Maoz Kahana and Michael K. Silber, "Deists, Sabbatians and Kabbalists in Prague: A Censored Sermon of R. Ezekiel Landau, 1770" [Hebrew], *Kabbalah* 21 (2010), 349–84, esp. 378–81.

[33] Ezekiel Paneth, *Mar'eh Yeḥezkel ha-Shalem*, ed Mordekhai Grinfeld, 2 vols. (Monsey, NY, 2004), I, 106–20; Zvi Elimeleh of Dynow in his commentary *Ma'ayan Ganim* on the sixteenth-century treatise of Yosef Yaavetz, *Or ha-Haim*: "Woe to us, that several of the great righteous of the generation have closed off the door of this wisdom [Kabbalah] to their students" (ch. 1).

[34] "Verhandlung der Israelitischen Kreis-Synode zu Würzburg, im Jahre 1836," *Sulamith* 8, 1 (1834–43), 373–4.

dybbuk possession confirmed the belief that malevolent demons were ubiquitous: "I saw with my own eyes several of our people who were possessed by the spirit . . . They would throw themselves down in the front of the synagogues . . . They would pound their chests cruelly with large rocks." However, "In 1758 and 1759, I came to know and to be convinced that we mortals including gentiles have nothing to fear from the influence of demons." Although not stated expressly, these were the very years Dov Ber took part in the debates with Jacob Frank and his followers in Lwow. Did the excesses of Sabbatean heresy bring about this volte-face? Later he adds that the decisive factor was the annexation of Galicia by the Habsburg state: "It is now some thirty years or more that one has not heard of harm coming to people at the hands of demons . . . For fear of the armies and the numerous soldiers of His Majesty the emperor, the demons have fled entirely from these lands."[35]

The *dybbuks* may have fled Galicia, a fact confirmed and mourned by the compiler of the legends of Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism,[36] but, in spite of the beneficial presence of Joseph II and his enlightened regime, they seemed to have lingered on to do mischief in Moravia. Two accounts of demonic possession and exorcism, conducted ninety years apart in 1696 and 1785 by incumbent Moravian chief rabbis in the community of Nikolsburg, seem to suggest that little had changed in the interim, and cautions against drawing overhasty conclusions about disenchantment.[37]

To be sure, interest in the occult persisted even in an age of Enlightenment, and not necessarily among the benighted populace.[38] The cultural profile of Nathan Arnstein and Bernhard Eskeles, brothers-in-law and partners in one of the most important banking firms in Vienna, whose wives were famous *salonnières*, becomes somewhat more complex when their membership in the Order of Asiatic Brethren is considered. Founded in Vienna in 1781–3 by Thomas von Schönfeld (the Sabbatean Moses Dobruska in his former

[35] Gershon D. Hundert, "The Introduction to *Divre Binah* by Dov Ber of Bolechów," *AJS Review* 33, 2 (November, 2009), 225–69, here 241–2.

[36] Dov Ber of Linitz's preface to *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, trans. and intro. by Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz (Bloomington, 1970), 3–5.

[37] *Ma'aseh h[ashem] ki nora hu*, published in Moses ben Menahem Graf, *Zera kodesh matzevata* (Fürth, 1696), and Abraham Hayat, *Ruah Haim* (Nikolsburg, 1785). Both are reprinted in Gedalyahu Nigal, *Sipurei Dybuk be-Sifrut Yisrael* [Tales of the *Dybbuk* in Jewish Literature] (Jerusalem, 1983), 132–44. See now Sarah Zfatman, *Tze Tome!* [Out Unclean Spirit!] (Jerusalem, 2015), an impressive annotated edition of the various versions of the first Nikolsburg exorcism.

[38] Jacob Katz, "The Suggested Relationship between Sabbatianism, Haskalah, and Reform," in Katz, *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem, 1998), 504–30.

incarnation), the Order – "an imitation or kind of travesty of the Freemasons" – combined masonic lore with purported kabbalistic teachings and sought to create a neutral association for Jews and Christians alike. Among the many prominent civil servants and aristocrats who mingled with the Jewish bankers, one could find Count György Festetics (1755–1819), the head of the Hungarian Freemasons who, in the lodge, went by the "kabbalist" appellation "Eliphas."[39]

The decade of the 1750s is also significant in that it marks a key transition in the history of Halakhah, setting off a dialectical development over two generations that would culminate in the closing years of the second decade of the nineteenth century. Two figures have dominated the halakhic discourse of the last two and a half centuries, Ezekiel Landau (1713–93), rabbi of Prague, and Moses Sofer (1762–1839), rabbi of Pressburg, better known by the titles of their respective responsa collections, *Noda bi-Yehudah* and *Ḥatam Sofer*. As we have seen, both were the leading heads of academies in their day, but both were also the leading decisors of their generation and subsequent ones as well, to this very day.

The two have been often contrasted. Landau's more flexible approach was taken to be representative of traditional Halakhah before the challenge of modern Jewish ideologies at the turn of the century brought about a conservative reaction led by the Ḥatam Sofer.[40] But, rather than being viewed as merely a passive foil to highlight the conservative innovations of his successor the Ḥatam Sofer, Landau has now been evaluated on his own terms. Far from representing the culmination of the final chapter of what Jacob Katz characterized as "traditional society," Landau in fact inaugurated a more open process toward the end of the 1750s that could be characterized as reflecting the Enlightened *Zeitgeist* of the eighteenth century. Landau's project was basically one of canonization, determining which elements of tradition were to be considered authoritative in deciding halakhic issues. His astonishing determination to return to the pristine talmudic source, skipping over the medieval authorities; his "purification" of the canon by excluding bodies of knowledge such as the Kabbalah and time-honored customs derived from such sanctified sources as the medieval German Pietists; as well as his dismissal of local practice – all reveal the

[39] Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723–1939* (Cambridge, MA, 1970); Gershom Scholem, *Du Frankisme au jacobinisme* (Paris, 1981).

[40] Moshe Samet, *He-Hadash Asur Min ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 2005); Jacob Katz, "Towards a Biography of the Hatam Sofer," in Francis Malino and David Sorkin, eds., *From East to West: Jews in a Changing Europe* (London, 1990), 223–66; and Katz, *He-Halakha be-Metzar* (Jerusalem, 1992).

dynamic development of Landau's halakhic worldview.[41] Landau's puritanical approach, combined with his liberal flexibility, proved an inspiration for some of his Haskalah-minded disciples in the following generation, such as Aron Chorin, rabbi of Arad, and Moshe Kunitz, rabbi of Buda, who went on to sanction synagogue reforms by returning to halakhic fundamentals at the expense of accepted traditions. But it also elicited a reactionary conservatism in the likes of the Ḥatam Sofer, whose Orthodox worldview began to be formulated in the second decade of the nineteenth century in calculated rejection of Landau's approach.

SECULARIZATION, ACCULTURATION, AND CONVERSION

Viennese Jewry was in the vanguard of cultural and religious transformation of the Jews in the Habsburg Monarchy in the eighteenth century. Up until mid-century, the small group of wealthy Court Jews in Vienna seem to have led conventional traditional lives, some even attaining considerable status as recognized scholars in the Talmud and the Kabbalah.[42] Important evidence of a significant change in religious life that occurred sometime between the conclusion of the Seven Years' War and the promulgation of the Edict of Toleration is provided by the early history of the Viennese *ḥevra kadisha*.[43] Established in 1763 by young bachelors from the leading families in Vienna, they numbered among their ranks scions of the most prominent Court Jews, such as members of the Wertheimer, Sinzheim, Margulies, Jaffe, and Schlesinger families, the young teenagers Nathan Arnstein and Bernhard Eskeles, and even the newcomer Karl Abraham Wetzlar, all of whom were later to play such important roles in Vienna's economy and were among the first Jews to be ennobled in modern times. (Perhaps it was these young men who raucously caroused on Purim eve three years later, sleigh-riding through the streets of Vienna with music and torches, and subsequently incurring heavy fines for flouting the general mourning that had been declared for the late Emperor.)[44] The intent of the founders to pursue the trio of classical virtues – study, worship, and charitable good deeds – was given expression in the regulations of the society in terms that, at such a late date, were remarkably traditional: weekly lessons in the Talmud, fasting on the eve of the New Moon, a

[41] See the groundbreaking thesis of Maoz Kahana, *From the Noda bi-Yehudah to the Ḥatam Sofer: Halakhah and Thought in their Historical Moment* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2015).

[42] Their tombstones note honorifics such as *moreinu* ("possessing an advanced diploma") or *aluf* ("a learned communal leader"): Wachstein, *Inschriften*.

[43] B. Wachstein, *Die Gründung der Wr. Chewra Kadischa im Jahre 1763* (Vienna, 1911).

[44] Oluf Gerhard Tychsen, *Bützowische Nebenstunden*, vol. VI (1769), 74.

quorum to study at the bedside of the sick, reciting psalms for the ill and the dead, personal commitment to participating in the burial of the dead, and so on. Rather cheekily, the bachelors pronounced the pious hope that the society would serve as a model to be emulated by the married men.

Yet, within two decades or so, there was a noticeable retreat from these virtuous intentions. "We have seen with clarity," the regulations intoned, "that everything changes according to the time and the place." Consequently, a sermon in ethics replaced the Talmud lesson, fasting was declared burdensome, forming a quorum for the sick impractical, and burial of the dead relegated to professionals. While the regulations could still conclude with an appeal "to preserve and observe the Torah more precious than gold and pearls . . . so that He will gather us from the four corners of the earth to bring us to Zion," they gave clear proof of waning piety and religious fervor, despite the absence of new ideological orientations such as those espoused at the time by Berlin's innovative benevolent society, the Gesellschaft der Freunde, which sought to displace the traditional *ḥevra kadisha*.

There were other early indications of the religious decline that was to gain momentum in the next generation of Vienna's Jewish elite. The first converts from this stratum were relative newcomers to the capital such as Karl Abraham Wetzlar, who had made his fortune during the Seven Years' War as an army purveyor, and had moved to Vienna in 1767. In 1776, he converted and soon thereafter was ennobled as Baron von Plankenstern. In the next three years, his children followed him to the baptismal font, including Raimund, who later served as godfather to Mozart's firstborn son.[45] Several members of the Hönig and Dobruschka families, both prominent in tobacco leasing, also converted around this time and were raised into the nobility.[46]

Scandal and conversion also touched on two of the most prominent families in Vienna already in the late 1770s. Eleanora Eskeles (1752–1812), daughter of the late Moravian chief rabbi, abandoned her Jewish husband Meyer Fliess, and in 1777 became the mistress of Valentin Günther, the Emperor's favorite, bearing him two children.[47] Joseph Adam Arnsteiner (1754–1811), who had also married into the Fliess family, was baptized as

[45] Klaus Edel, *Karl Abraham Wetzlar Freiherr von Plankenstern, 1715(16)–1799* (Vienna, 1975).

[46] Anna L. Staudacher, *Jüdische Konvertiten in Wien 1782–1868*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 2002). On ennoblements, see Heinrich Schnee, *Die Hoffinanz und der moderne Staat* (Berlin, 1963), vol. IV, 311–45.

[47] Hilde Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein: Daughter of the Enlightenment 1758–1818* (New York, 1991), 68–9, 73–9, and Paul Bernard, *The Limits of Enlightenment: Joseph II and the Law* (Urbana, 1979), 93–4.

Michael Joseph Arnsteiner in 1778. No amount of pleading on his part could bring about a rapprochement with his parents.[48] Their siblings, later ennobled as Baron Nathan Adam von Arnstein (1748–1838) and Baron Bernhard von Eskeles (1753–1839), married around this time two daughters of the wealthy Daniel Itzig from Berlin, respectively Fanny (1757–1818) and Cäcilie (1760–1836). Both became leading *salonnières* in Vienna, holding "large musical parties," with Fanny entertaining such celebrities as Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton, and at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 hosting the foremost statesmen of Europe, among them Talleyrand, Wellington, Castlereagh, and Hardenberg.[49] Although both Arnstein and Eskeles remained Jewish, they lived to witness the conversion of their offspring. Fanny von Arnstein's daughter Henriette (1780–1859), who married Heinrich Pereira, had their 4-year-old son converted in 1808. Cäcilie Eskeles's daughter Henrika Eskeles (b. 1802) herself converted in 1824 and married Count Franz von Wimpffen the following year.[50]

Even before the reign of Joseph II, Habsburg Jewry had undergone a certain limited degree of acculturation that at times also indicated a modicum of secularization. Take the Jewish beard for instance. In a clean-shaven century such as the eighteenth, Jewish men could readily be distinguished by their beards. When the young Abraham Levie from Amsterdam arrived in Nikolsburg in 1719, he noted in his travel account that the same clothing was worn in Moravia as in Poland, and that "The married men all wear beards, big beards, and do not permit themselves to be shaved even with scissors." In Vienna, he was struck by the contrast between two Court Jews: Samson Wertheimer, called the "Judenkaiser," who was "dressed in the manner of a Pole and has a long white beard," and the other rich Jew, Mendel Oppenheimer, who was short in stature and had no beard at all.[51] It was quite acceptable that Court Jews should shave off their beards seeing as how they were "close to the powers that be." Nevertheless, Oppenheimer seems to have been an exception because married men, including most Court Jews, did grow beards, but the full Polish style gave way in the Bohemian lands to the so-called chin beard that accorded with general fashions by exposing most of a shaven visage. Apparently, the chin beard got smaller and smaller so that the very first statute that Ezekiel Landau instituted upon arrival in Prague in the summer of 1755 was to establish its minimal length as the

[48] Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein*, 52–6. [49] Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein*.

[50] See the entries for Arnstein and Eskeles in the exceptional genealogical study by Georg Gaugusch, *Wer einmal war: Das jüdische Großbürgertum Wiens 1800–1938*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 2011–16).

[51] *Travels among Jews and Gentiles: Abraham Levie's Travelogue, Amsterdam 1764*, ed. Shlomo Berger (Leiden, 2002), 79.

"breadth of a half a finger."[52] The state too felt the need to restate and enforce distinguishing signs, and Maria Theresa's new regulation for the Jews of Vienna in 1764 declared beards mandatory for married men. If caught without a beard, the punishment was prison, and a first-time violation drew a substantial fine of 24 Reichsthaler for the wealthy, and bodily punishment for the poor; the second time – even harsher – expulsion from Vienna.[53] But what about bachelors? For some reason, unknown even to the rabbis, the custom had evolved in central Europe that bachelors did not grow beards. But then, agonized the bureaucrats, how could young Jewish men be distinguished as recognizably Jewish? Indeed, most of the complaints that reached the court involved sword-toting young Jews who mixed freely with Christians, habituated cafés, taverns, and city parks, attended operas and comedies where they occupied the best seats in the theatre, and hung about dance halls engaging in a variety of unacceptable behavior with disreputable wenches. "I have often noted the spectacle of Jewish youths and maidens mixing with the nobility," opined Count Hatzfeld; "They could not be distinguished from them by their clothes which were just as costly as those of the nobility."[54] This did not sit well with the Empress, and in 1760 she ordered that Jewish bachelors without beards should wear yellow armbands. The regulation apparently was observed in the breach: twenty-six Jewish young men between the ages of 15 and 26 were arrested that year in Prague for not wearing the yellow badge. On the other hand, it did elicit protest from foreign Jews who declared their refusal to come to Prague because of the decree.[55] But by 1781, when Joseph II proposed to eliminate all distinguishing signs, the Moravian authorities noted that:

> As for the difference in the costume, it has long since ceased in Moravia, so much so that besides pious Jews who still wear beards in accordance with their laws, one can perceive no difference between Jewish and Christian men and women in their dress, especially the women and daughters of the rich Jew who socialize just like the nobility.[56]

As time went on, even after the various Edicts of Toleration issued by Joseph II had abolished any legislation that mandated distinguishing

[52] Tobias Jakobovits, "Die Judenabzeichen in Böhmen," *JGGJČR* 3 (1931), 145–85, here 171.
[53] Alfred Pribram, *Urkunden und Akten zur Geschichte der Juden in Wien* (Vienna, 1918) I, 378.
[54] Ibid., 366, 434–5.
[55] Jakobovits, "Judenabzeichen," 181: Beilage XII; L. Moses, "Der gelbe Fleck in Prag," *JGGJČR* 9 (1938), 459–62; Gerson Wolf, *Aus der Zeit der Kaiserin Maria Theresia* (Vienna, 1888), 66.
[56] Report of the Moravian Gubernium, August 9, 1781, *MZsSz* 20 (1903), 113.

marks, religious observance and reluctance to acculturate still dictated the Jewish visage. One observer of the Viennese scene noted in 1805, "Ordinary Jews wear their beards long; the more wealthy and liberal they become in their observance, the smaller becomes their beard until finally it disappears altogether."[57]

All this is true as far as the western part of the Monarchy is concerned. In Galicia, Dov Ber Birkenthal wrote with pride of how Jews had always separated themselves by refusing to imitate the dress and language of their surroundings, speaking amongst themselves Yiddish without a single foreign word. Yet when confronted with religious laxity, the association that came to his mind, as worldly as he was, was the shaven visage, and precisely that of a bachelor. "In these times, some of our people have begun to imitate the shaven young bachelors [*bahurim*] of Ashkenaz," he moaned, "who are accustomed from their youth to pursue the appetites of this world, and they permit themselves [to transgress] several positive and negative commandments, for many have mingled with gentiles."[58] By the end of our period, in their appearance, the masses of Jews in the eastern and western part of the Monarchy had drifted apart, and the men, in particular, could be readily distinguished by type of beard – or the lack of one.

Until the era of Joseph II, linguistic acculturation progressed slowly but perceptibly. Although Yiddish remained their mother tongue, many Jews gained a measure of elementary linguistic proficiency in their interaction with non-Jewish surroundings. The wealthier classes had their children tutored in various languages, and the learned elite may also have had knowledge of the local vernacular. While Eliah Rosenthal was attending the Pressburg *yeshiva* of R. Meir Barbi in 1775, his father, the wealthy uncrowned head of Hungarian Jewry, urged him not to neglect lessons in French and German.[59] Thus we should take with a pinch of salt what Isaac Hirsch Weiss writes in his memoirs of his father's youth in the 1770s: that only one man in his community in Moravia could sign his name in German.[60] Nevertheless, on the whole, most Jews had but rudimentary knowledge of German. As Ezekiel Landau noted in 1782 in his famous sermon of *Shabbat ha-Gadol*, the Great Sabbath before Passover, when welcoming the Josephinian schools:

> The government has done a great favor in deciding to teach our children to speak correctly. Even in the Bible we were criticized for not knowing how to speak the

[57] Johann Pezzl, *Neue Skizze von Wien* (Vienna, 1805), 57.
[58] Hundert, "Introduction to Divre Binah by Dov Ber of Bolechów," 235, 238, 256, 266.
[59] Letter of Naphtali Rosenthal, 7 Adar I 1755: Budapest, Rabbinic Seminary, Rosenthal correspondence Mss., fol. 3.
[60] I. H. Weiss, *Zikhronotai* (Warsaw, 1895), 15.

various languages. Do not think that you know how to speak the German language. No one can be said to know a language unless he can speak it grammatically . . . most of our labor is in the area of trade and commerce, which requires the ability to write and to speak the language of the country.[61]

Indeed, soon after the schools were established, masses of Jewish children in backward communities throughout the Monarchy achieved a competency in German that only few Jews in larger urban centers like Vienna, Prague, and Pressburg had possessed earlier. The 1780s, then, marked the popularization of what had been until then solely the culture of elites.

HABSBURG POLICIES AND JEWISH LOYALTIES

The relationship between rulers of the Habsburg house and their Jews was complex. On the whole, it seemed one-sided, with Jews celebrating their sovereigns only to be rewarded with contempt, even hatred. Nevertheless, there were at times contrary moments that complicated this generalization.

The spirit of the counter-Reformation was an important factor in the Habsburg policies toward their Jewish subjects in the first half of the long eighteenth century, while the regime of Joseph II toward the end of the century was marked by a drive to establish a more centralized state along the lines of enlightened absolutism. The twenty or so years in between formed a period of transition, leaving behind the era of Baroque confessionalization, instituting bureaucratic reforms and greater social disciplining, and moving toward the creation of a more capable military and a modern centralized state apparatus.

The expulsion of the Jews of Vienna and Lower Austria in 1670 was brought about by a combination of bizarre superstitions at the court – especially harbored by the pregnant Spanish-born Empress Margareta who was "zealous in her Religion, and an Enemy unto the Jews" – the hooliganism of university students, jealous competition from the burghers, the uncertain motives of a circle of high court officials and clerics who were often at loggerheads, and traditional anti-Jewish prejudices. The feuding within Viennese Jewry, typical of many Jewish communities during this period, exacerbated the already fraught situation with internal scandal.[62]

[61] Ezekiel Landau, "Sermon for the Sabbath Preceding Passover (1782, Prague)," in Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800: An Anthology* (New Haven, 1989), 366–7.

[62] David Kaufmann, *Die letzte Vertreibung der Juden aus Wien und Niederoesterreich. Ihre Vorgeschichte (1625–1670) und ihre Opfer* (Vienna, 1889); Peter Rauscher, "'Auf der Schipp': Ursachen und Folgen der Ausweisung der Wiener Juden 1670," *Aschkenas* 16 (2006), 421–38. The sources can be found in Pribram, *Urkunden und Akten*, I, 197–265.

In the Holy Roman Empire outside the Habsburg territories, expulsions of this kind were becoming exceedingly rare,[63] a key factor in which, ironically, was the possibility of appealing to the Emperor as final arbiter, an option unavailable to Habsburg Jewry alone. And yet, eight years after the Vienna expulsion, Prague Jewry joyously celebrated the birth of the Crown Prince with a raucous joyful carnival parade, a spectacle whose like "had not been seen in hundreds of years."[64] To be sure, not all Jews were happy to greet the Habsburgs. One contemporary account of the failed Habsburg siege of Buda during the summer and fall months of 1684 noted that the Ottoman commander "had Seven thousand Men of the old Troops, not counting the Inhabitants and Jews, who did almost as much Service as the Souldiers."[65]

Nevertheless, there was some light amidst the shadows of Leopold's reign (1658–1705). The years of constant warfare, first against the Turks, then the French, then the long years of the War of the Spanish Succession, created a spiral of military expenses as the need to outfit, arm, and provision ever-growing armies made increasing demands on state finances and infrastructure.[66] It was this weak state that created unprecedented opportunities for Samuel Oppenheimer, Samson Wertheimer, and a handful of Court Jews who were permitted to return to Vienna to provide the finances and provisioning of the troops without which the victories of Prince Eugene of Savoy would not have been possible.[67] The deep pride in the prominent role Court Jews played in the military campaigns comes across in the rather impudent reply one of Oppenheimer's Jewish agents gave in the winter of 1702 when threatened with expulsion from the Hungarian city, Győr. He was not leaving at any time, he informed the authorities firmly. Need they be reminded that his master had assiduously looked after His Majesty's treasury, and that had he failed to do so perhaps His Majesty would not have been able to hold his own in the war?![68] Oppenheimer and other Court

[63] See the list of expulsions in the Reich in Sabine Frey, *Rechtsschutz der Juden gegen Ausweisungen im 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 1983), 149–50.

[64] *Judæorum Morologia oder Jüdisches Affen-Spiel* (Leipzig, 1678).

[65] Jean de Préchac, *The Serasquier Bassa: An Historical Novel of The Times, Containing All That Pass'd at the Siege of Buda* [trans. from French] (London, 1685), 85.

[66] See Michael Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars of Emergence 1683–1797* (London, 2003); Peter Rauscher, ed., *Kriegsführung und Staatsfinanzen* (Münster, 2010), 24, for a diagram of the rising military outlays of the Habsburg Monarchy during 1655 to 1735.

[67] Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750*, 3rd edn. (London, 1998); Max Grunwald, *Samuel Oppenheimer und sein Kreis* (Vienna, 1913). See the list of close to eighty contracts for provisioning the army between 1685 and 1698 in *Magyar Zsidó Oklevéltár* [*MzsO*] (Budapest) 14 (1971), 36–7. See also *MZsO* 16 (1974), 371–4, 388–412; *MZsO* 17 (1977), 31–169.

[68] József Kemény, *Vázlatok a győri zsidóság történetéből* (Győr, 1930), 215–16.

Jews could at times parlay their economic influence to intervene on behalf of the Jewish collective, as in the successful suppression and confiscation of Johann Andreas Eisenmenger's scurrilous anti-talmudic tract *Entdecktes Judenthum*.

Karl VI (r. 1711–40) ascended the throne after the brief rule of his brother Joseph. Under his reign, Jews encountered the usual litany of woes: accusations of host desecration, of stealing ritual objects, of blasphemy; imprisonment; torture; executions; book burnings; synagogues being shut down; ritual blood libels; mob violence; etc.[69] We have seen the introduction of the Familiants Laws limiting the number of families in the Bohemian crownlands, and the segregation of Jewish residences from Christian ones. Nevertheless, certain of Karl's actions and statements are noteworthy. When he was conducting war on the Iberian Peninsula as King of Spain in 1709, he declared, "It has long been my intention to introduce the Jews to Spain," and in 1728, on the heels of the Familiants Laws, he issued a remarkable decree permitting Jews to resettle in Sicily, then a Habsburg possession, to engage unhindered in trade, to exercise their religion freely, to enjoy judicial autonomy, and even to be permitted to purchase property.[70] Could it be that, in his capacity as King of Spain (as he continued to style himself long after the Treaty of Utrecht), he allowed himself to be far more liberal toward Jews, in particular Sephardim? Would this explain another riddle – namely, the ennoblement in 1726 of Diego d'Aguilar as Baron of the Holy Roman Empire without much ado, even though his identity as a Portuguese Jew was no secret at the court?[71]

Karl spent much energy in trying to ensure that the powers-that-be recognized his daughter Maria Theresa as the legitimate heir to his throne, to no avail. The War of the Austrian Succession broke out soon after she ascended the throne in 1740. In the hiatus between hostilities, celebrations took place throughout the Monarchy with the birth of Crown Prince Joseph in 1741. Once again, the Jews of Prague demonstrated their dynastic loyalty by hauling out carnival props from storage and putting on an even more splendid parade than the two earlier ones in 1678 and 1716. The spectacle was commemorated in an impressive print and an accompanying pamphlet that lovingly described the order of the procession, the various

[69] See Miller, *Rabbis and Revolutionaries*.

[70] Letter from Karl to Count Wratislaw, Barcelona, November 23, 1709, in Alfred Arneth, "Eigenhändige Correspondenz des Königs Karl III. von Spanien (nachmals Kaiser Karl VI.)," *Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichts-Quellen* 16 (1856), 97–9, here 98; and Felix Liebrecht, "Die Vertreibung der Juden aus Sicilien (1492)," *Die Grenzboten* 32, 2 (1873), 490–500, esp. 500.

[71] Paul Josef Diamant, "Zur Biographie des Baron Diego d'Aguilar," *Archiv für jüdische Familienforschung* 2, 4–6 (1917), 14.

groups, and their costumes and sumptuous clothes.[72] Yet when the French, Prussian, and Bavarian forces invaded the Bohemian lands, and the Bavarian Emperor Karl VII received homage in Prague, Maria Theresa singled out the Jews for having betrayed her by collaborating with the enemy. In December 1744, she ordered the expulsion of the Jews from Prague and soon after from Bohemia and Moravia as well. An international campaign was launched by Court Jews throughout Europe to solicit foreign sovereigns to intercede on behalf of the expelled Jews. The actions of the Queen were widely perceived as irrational, capricious, and cruel. No one, not even her mother or her husband, could dissuade her. "There is no accounting for this singular affair," wrote the English ambassador from Vienna, "but by imputing it to some rash vow, or at least to some very early insurmountable prejudice in the course of her education. Her aversion to the sight of a Jew was too great to be concealed."[73] Indeed, it was said that she refused to receive Jews in audience face-to-face and remained behind a paravent. Whether truth or legend, the anecdote accurately reflects her sentiments toward Jews. Near the end of her life in 1777, she would note: "I do not know a worse public plague than this nation; with their fraud, usury, and money dealing they reduce people to beggary, practicing all sort of evil transactions that an honest man abhors. Therefore, they are to be kept away from here and [their numbers] diminished as far as possible."[74] Whether it was due to the Europe-wide intercession or the campaign to have her husband elected Emperor, the edict ordering the expulsion from Bohemia and Moravia was suspended in the spring of 1745, but the Jews of Prague were allowed to return only in 1748. She demanded larger annual payments from the Jews of Bohemia and promptly placed a new Toleration Tax on the Jews of Hungary, the so-called *malkegeld* ("Queen's coin").[75]

[72] *Beschreibung einer allerunterthänigsten Freudens-Bezeugung* . . . (n.p., 1741), repr. in "Ein Curiosum aus dem Jahre 1741," *Deborah* (Prague) 1 (1866), 54–5, 66–7. The print is entitled *Kostbar-Zierlicher Aufzug . . . welicher von der Pragerischen Judenschafft den 24. April A° 1741. Gehalten worden* . . . . See also Rachel Greenblatt, *To Tell Their Children: Jewish Communal Memory in Early Modern Prague* (Stanford, 2014).

[73] Johann Krengel, "Die englische Intervention zu Gunsten der böhmischen Juden im Jahre 1744," *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 44 (1900), 177–281, esp. 277; Baruch Mevorah, "Die Interventionsbestrebungen in Europa zur Verhinderung der Juden aus Böhmen und Mähren 1744–1745," *Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 9 (1980), 15–81; François Guesnet, "Textures of Intercession: Rescue Efforts for the Jews of Prague, 1744/1748," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 4 (2005), 355–75.

[74] June 14, 1777: Pribram, *Urkunden und Akten*, I, 425–6.

[75] Béla Bernstein, "Die Toleranztaxe der Juden in Ungarn," in Marcus Brann and Ferdinand Rosenthal, eds., *Gedenkbuch zur Erinnerung an David Kaufmann* (Wrocław, 1900), 599–628.

In the aftermath of the war, she embarked upon a rigorous campaign of reform and centralization in her realm. She established a standing army, expanded the bureaucracy to counter the power of the local lords, instituted reforms in the obligations owed by a peasant to his lord in order to increase the tax revenues to the crown, and attempted to centralize the administration of her far-flung lands. When the Seven Years' War erupted, Jews throughout the Monarchy, but especially in Prague, did everything in their power to ensure that not even the slightest doubt of their loyalty to the dynasty was posed. Rabbi Landau issued a series of bans on any wrongdoers during the war and earned the grudging approval of the Empress. It was during these years that the key regulations regarding the Jews in Moravia, in 1754, and, with the annexation of Galicia, the General Regulation for Jews in 1776 were legislated. She also toyed with the idea of setting up an area of restricted residence for the Jews of Vienna, but nothing came of it. When she died, Landau eulogized her, praising tactfully those aspects of her character that had nothing to do with her Jewish subjects: her maternal concern for her subjects, her talent as a sovereign, her modesty and piety, etc.[76] Only two years later, in 1782, on the Sabbath before Passover, did he allow himself to express his true feelings, albeit in an indirect fashion, in a sermon in praise of the new ruler Joseph II and his Edict of Toleration. He contrasted two types of rulers: one like Cyrus, benign, who taxed his subjects fairly; the other like Pharaoh, who not only sought to extract more than was justly due, but in the process also humiliated his subjects. Landau praised Joseph II as a ruler in the mold of Cyrus, but left unsaid whose rule was akin to Pharaoh's.[77]

ENLIGHTENED ABSOLUTISM AND TRANSITION TO THE MODERN ERA

The accession of Joseph II (1741–90) as sole ruler of the Habsburg lands in 1780 ushered in a tumultuous decade of change. The enlightened absolutist Emperor intervened in the internal affairs of his Jewish subjects, altering the contours of Jewish culture and society on an unprecedented scale.[78] Within a year of succeeding his mother to the throne, Joseph II began to issue Edicts of Toleration for his Jewish subjects, separate patents for each

[76] Marc Saperstein, "In Praise of an Anti-Jewish Empress: Ezekiel Landau's Eulogy for Maria Theresa," in Saperstein, *"Your Voice like a Ram's Horn": Themes and Texts in Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati, 1996), 445–84.

[77] "Sermon for the Sabbath Preceding Passover," 361–3.

[78] What follows is a summary based largely upon Michael K. Silber, "Josephinian Reforms," in *YEJEE*, 831–4.

of the various possessions.[79] The last of these, the edict for Galicia issued on the eve of the French Revolution in 1789, was the most systematic, the most regulatory, and the most far-reaching piece of legislature on European Jews before the Emancipation of French Jewry. In terms both of cultural transformation and of moving toward a sort of legal civic equality, it propelled the Jews of the Monarchy into the modern era.

To make the Jews more useful and productive subjects meant a dual transformation, economic and cultural. It was through education that a prerequisite linguistic shift would be accomplished, therefore Jews were called upon to establish their own schools where their children would be taught reading and writing in German, and arithmetic. Existing restrictions on livelihood would be removed and new opportunities opened up in agriculture, transportation, crafts, arts, and manufacture. Jews were to be restored to their dignity: swords could be worn; the degrading body tax and discriminatory signs would be abolished. But the Familiants Laws were retained, as well as restrictions on tolerated Jews in Vienna, and the Toleration Tax.

In the wake of the Edict, Jewish *Normalschulen* were established: 1 school each in Trieste and Görz, 25 in Bohemia, 18 in Moravia (at least), 36 in Hungary, and 93 (rising eventually to more than 120) in Galicia and Bukowina.[80] Thus, thousands of Jewish boys – and, soon after, girls – received a secular education in the Monarchy, in often backward small towns in the periphery, at a time when the *maskilim* in Germany were struggling to keep one school in Berlin afloat.[81] Unlike the program of the Haskalah as outlined

[79] For Joseph's legislation, see *Vollständige Sammlung aller seit dem glorreichsten Regierungsantritt Joseph des Zweyten … Verordnungen und Gesetze …*, 10 vols. (Vienna, 1788–91).

[80] Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, 1999); Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte der Juden in den böhmischen Ländern. Erster Teil: Das Zeitalter der Aufklärung 1780–1830* (Tübingen, 1969), 39–65; Louise Hecht, *Ein jüdischer Aufklärer in Böhmen: Der Pädagoge und Reformer Peter Beer (1758–1838)* (Cologne, 2008), 66–83; Louise Hecht, "'Gib dem Knaben Unterricht nach seiner Weise' (Spr. 22,6)," in Martin Scheutz, Wolfgang Schmale, and Dana Štefanová, eds., *Orte des Wissens* (Bochum, 2004), 117–34; Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 47–51; Dirk Sadowski, *Haskala und Lebenswelt: Herz Homberg und die jüdischen deutschen Schulen in Galizien 1782–1806* (Göttingen, 2010); Michael Silber, "The Historical Experience of German Jewry and its Impact on Haskalah and Reform in Hungary," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987), 107–57; David Rechter, *Becoming Habsburg: The Jews of Austrian Bukovina, 1774–1918* (Oxford, 2013).

[81] Contrasting maps can well reflect visually the reigning paradigm in German Jewish history that tends to gloss over eighteenth-century Habsburg developments. Compare "MAP 6 The Berlin Haskalah and the Establishment of Modern Jewish Schools," in Michael A. Meyer and Michael Brenner, eds., *German-Jewish History in Modern Times: Emancipation and Acculturation, 1780–1871* (New York, 1997), with the two maps of the

by Naphtali Hirtz Wessely in his *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (1782), this was a utilitarian agenda that aimed only to impart a modicum of secular education while significantly keeping hands off the traditional religious curriculum. (The school in Trieste with its combined curriculum was the exception that proved the rule.) Such educational reforms could be cautiously accepted by the traditional Jewish establishment; indeed, celebrations overseen by local rabbis accompanied the inauguration of schools in Trieste, Prague, Pressburg, Lemberg, and Brody. There is no reason to suspect that there was any principled opposition to these schools; if anything, it was the financial burden that posed a problem. However, the appointment of the maskil Herz Homberg as supervisor of the Jewish normal schools in Galicia in 1787, and a little later as supervisor of religious education as well, aroused suspicion and opposition.[82] The schools also played a role in integrating the various Jewries. Communities noted the precedents in the curricula set by Trieste and Prague, and accepted or rejected them. Moreover, the circulation of teachers moving from Bohemia and Moravia to Galicia and Hungary, and some going on to the German lands also served to create a network of young Jewish intelligentsia. For those teachers – perhaps most of them – who were *maskilim*, the Josephinian school system gave them opportunities, resources, and authority to carry out at least a truncated vision of the Haskalah.

In the years that followed, a number of additional decrees were issued in order to bring Jewish legal status in line with general reforms. The second half of Joseph's rule from 1785 onward was characterized by a more systematic and radical bent – in some ways more liberal, but also tending toward rash social engineering. The authority of rabbinic courts was confined to arbitration, the ban of excommunication prohibited, and communal autonomy was restricted to purely religious matters (May 27, 1785 Galician Patent). The general Marriage Patent of 1786 also impinged upon specific Jewish laws and customs, as did the mandated waiting period of 48 hours before the dead could be buried (July 3, 1786). The normal school certification came to be increasingly exploited as a convenient prerequisite for any number of matters: engaging in certain occupations; marriage (April 15, 1786); and entering the rabbinate and Talmud study for children (1789 Galician Edict).

Joseph also ordered the brutal expulsion of several thousand indigent and vagabond Jews from Galicia. Only those Jews who personally worked the land were to be tolerated – even encouraged – in rural areas. Jews were

Normalschule dotting Galicia in 1788 and 1797 in Sadowski, *Haskala und Lebenswelt*, 129, 135.

[82] Rachel Manekin, "Naftali Herz Homberg – ha-Dmut ve-ha-Dimui" [Naftali Herz Homberg – The Person and his Representation], *Zion* 71 (2006), 153–202; Sadowski, *Haskala und Lebenswelt*.

ordered to adopt personal and family names (July 23, 1787) (for the most part German ones, which would have consequences later in the age of nationalism). More important was the military conscription of Jews that began in Galicia in February 1788 and spread to the Bohemian lands and Hungary in the months that followed. This was the first time that Jews served as soldiers in modern times, and it was not universally well received. Various attempts at intercession to exchange personal service for a fee or a surrogate were met by the Emperor with adamant refusal. It has been estimated that 35,000 Jews served in the Habsburg armies during the quarter of a century of French wars.[83]

The Edict of Toleration issued for Galicia on May 7, 1789, was the most far-reaching to date and was also intended for the rest of the Empire. While it denied the Jews the right to exist as a separate corporate entity, it granted them equal civil rights in their places of residence along with passive and active voting rights in municipal elections. By granting the Jews the right to own land, the possibility opened up that Jews could become serfs, but also owners of noble estates. A few months later, when a decree enabled Jews to buy up entire estates with all the attending feudal privileges, Israel Hönig purchased the Velm estate and became the first Jew in the Habsburg Monarchy in modern times to be raised to the nobility, on September 2, 1789. It would be more than two generations before the first Jew was ennobled in Prussia.

The 1789 Galician Edict of Toleration was the most influential piece of Jewish legislation in central and eastern Europe, since, in a truncated fashion, it became the model for legislation in other countries. By dint of state resources and coercion, the Habsburg Monarchy had initiated cultural, legal, and political changes that transformed its Jews in a quantitative and qualitative manner unequaled by the Haskalah in Germany. The legislation of Joseph II in 1789 represented the furthest point to which enlightened absolutism could move toward Jewish equality within the context of a feudal society of legally differentiated orders.[84]

DYNASTIC LOYALTY, PATRIOTISM, AND CHANGING MODES OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION

If, in Hungary, the Jews of Buda fought the Habsburgs tooth and nail in the 1680s, nearly a century later, in recently annexed Galicia, the Jews of Brody welcomed the new rulers joyously. The chaos and anarchy of a

[83] Michael K. Silber, "From Tolerated Aliens to Citizen-Soldiers: Jewish Military Service in the Era of Joseph II," in Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit, eds., *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* (New York, 2005), 19–36.

[84] Silber, "Josephinian Reforms."

disintegrating Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth no doubt made the Habsburg Monarchy seem like a solid alternative. The patriotic celebrations in Brody took place at the end of 1773, lasting from the early afternoon until well into the night, with the usual costly entertainment: a triumphal arch and Habsburg double-eagles decorating the synagogue; speechifying in Latin; prayers, singing, and music; free drinks and a lavish banquet attended by government officials.[85]

Such expressions of patriotism were not unusual. One could find in Jewish homes Ḥanuka lamps decorated with the Emperor's profile, and hanging Sabbath lamps with the Habsburg double eagle. Published pamphlets and prints commemorated patriotic parades, prayers for the rulers, poems in Hebrew dedicated to the imperial house, sermons in German celebrating victories, and eulogies. And when it came to the Emperor Joseph, messianic imagery was not lacking.

Both *maskilim* and traditional rabbis waxed patriotic on these occasions. In his Hebrew poem entitled "An Israelite Patriot Pours out his Heart" (1789), Barukh Jeitteles, the leading maskil in Prague, celebrated the Emperor both for his military successes at Belgrade and for having restored a humiliated people to their dignity.[86] At the other end of the monarchy, a generation later, Ezekiel Paneth (1783–1845), the chief rabbi of Transylvania, composed and published at his own expense a eulogy in German upon the death of Emperor Francis I (r. 1792–1835). This remarkable tribute by a Hasidic rabbi was in fact a paean to the dynasty as a whole, an excuse to enumerate lovingly each ruler and his accomplishments, since Rudolph, the first of his line.[87]

And yet, while acknowledging the improved situation of the Jews and praising the dynasty, there were voices that sought to dampen overly enthusiastic identification with the Habsburg state and its inhabitants. Two of these emanated from the most important rabbinic figures of their time. In the wake of the Edict of Toleration, Ezekiel Landau offered his gratitude to the Emperor, but on the eve of Passover 1782 he urged his parishioners to exercise caution: "Even if there should be a gracious and compassionate king who abundantly helps us, we should inwardly know that we are in a land not our own, and that we should remain submissive to the peoples of that land . . . Only next year, when you are in the land of Israel, our own ancestral estate, will you be truly free."[88] Just over thirty years

[85] *Wienerisches Diarium* 9 (1774); translated into Hebrew in N. M. Gelber, *Toldot Yehudei Brody 1584–1943* (Jerusalem, 1955), 118.
[86] B[arukh] J[eitteles], *Ma'arkhei Lev – Herzensergiessung israelitischer Patrioten* (Prague, 1789).
[87] Ezekiel Paneth, *Trauer Rede* (Hermannstadt, 1835).
[88] "Sermon for the Sabbath Preceding Passover," 363.

later, in 1813, when the Monarchy had been at war with the French on and off for a quarter of a century, some wealthy members of the Pressburg community pledged patriotic funds for wounded soldiers during the first day of Rosh Hashana services. The following day, according to an anonymous denunciation, the rabbi, Moses Sofer, addressed the congregation with "fanatic enthusiasm," protesting: "We are in captivity in the Galut, must we give our possessions earned with sweat to idol worshippers?!" Naturally, concluded the denunciation, no one dared anymore in public to make an offering to the mutilated defenders of the homeland. And indeed, a favorite saying of the Ḥatam Sofer was that Jews were "like prisoners of war in the Diaspora."[89]

Ironically, when, at the very onset of Joseph II's reign, the question had arisen of whether from then on Jews were to retain their status as only "tolerated," or should be raised to "received" subjects, liberal bureaucrats like court councilor Greiner urged the latter. By 1787, the Viennese court had made its position clear. When Jews were about to settle on the land in Galicia, a Galician bureaucrat had argued that a clear distinction should be made between Jews and "nationals," i.e. native subjects, the latter to be preferred in land allocation. The court angrily rejected this and declared that there was to be no difference between Jews and "nationals," because Jews themselves were "nationals." They were to be considered "entirely equal to all other inhabitants of a similar category."[90] The Galician *Judenpatent* of 1789 made this principle public knowledge.

The liberal actions of the state had called into question traditional modes of Jewish self-perception and self-identification, and elicited a range of Jewish reactions that adumbrated the great schisms of the nineteenth century.

CONCLUSION

It had long been the goal of the Habsburg Monarchs to bring the disparate lands of their Empire, each still with its own set of laws and legislative body, into an increasingly unified, centralized, and uniform political body. At the end of the long eighteenth century, advances had been made, yet the goal was to prove elusive even in the nineteenth century. Likewise, the various Jewries in the Monarchy still retained much of their heterogeneous nature and would do so in the future, in some ways even drifting more apart. Nevertheless, during the last decades of the eighteenth century, migration to Hungary from both Galicia and the Bohemian lands, the

[89] Anonymous denunciation, January 25, 1814: AVA Polizei Hofstelle 1814 ad 520.

[90] Report of Hofrat Greiner, September 7, 1781, in Pribram, *Urkunden und Akten*, I, 465, also 467; and Mauricy Lewin, "Geschichte der Juden in Galizien unter Kaiser Joseph II" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 1933), 90.

common dynasty and growing patriotism, the increasingly centralized bureaucracy and the bulldozing policies of Joseph II had created shared experiences in education, the military, citizenship, etc., that brought them closer together, while distancing them from other European Jewries, so that we can with justice speak of the making of a common Habsburg Jewry.

With the threat of revolutionary upheaval emanating from France, the Monarchy retreated from the Josephinian reforms during the twenty-five years of war it waged against the French and Napoleon. The 1789 Galician *Judenpatent*, slated also for extension to the other Habsburg provinces, was issued only in truncated form in Bohemia. The secular school system first collapsed in Hungary soon after the death of Joseph II, then was abolished in Galicia by his nephew in 1806.[91] Toward the end of the Napoleonic War, *maskilim* made several attempts to launch schools in Prague, Vienna, Pressburg, and Tarnopol along the lines of the Haskalah's dual program, now uniting secular studies and a reformed Bible-centered religious curriculum under one roof, with varying success. While many traditional rabbis, in particular Samuel Landau and Eleazar Fleckles of Prague, now made their peace with the program of the moderate Haskalah, a new reaction also emerged, led by the maverick conservative Moses Sofer, which rejected this accommodation and reaffirmed the initial opposition to Wessely and Mendelssohn.[92]

Historians have debated whether the transition to the modern age was incremental, spread over a century, or as Jacob Katz argued, a sharp break initiating a crisis in what he called traditional society. Ironically, more than German Jewry, it was the Jews of the Habsburg Monarchy, largely ignored by Katz, who in all their variety were transformed suddenly overnight by the state, but in a manner that did not necessarily induce crisis within a traditional society that could be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the state-mandated changes.[93]

[91] Dirk Sadowski, "The Jewish German Schools in Galicia (1782–1806) – School Reality and Corporate Resistance," *Jewish Culture and History* 13, 2–3 (2012), 153–72.

[92] Silber, "The Historical Experience of German Jewry"; Hillel J. Kieval, "The Unforeseen Consequences of Cultural Resistance: Haskalah and State-Mandated Reform in the Bohemian lands," *Jewish Culture and History* 13, 2–3 (2012), 108–23.

[93] Note that it is only in the tenth chapter of *Out of the Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA, 1972) that Katz gets around to addressing the role of the state. This order makes good sense for the German states where, for the most part, significant Jewish legislation was introduced only in the first decades of the nineteenth century, long after the rise of Haskalah, Reform, and Orthodoxy which Katz analyzes in earlier chapters. It becomes problematic when applied to the Habsburg states.

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CHAPTER 30

THE JEWS OF POLAND–LITHUANIA (1650–1815)

FRANÇOIS GUESNET

INTRODUCTION

Many contemporaries (as well as historians) considered the period up until the middle of the seventeenth century as the "Golden Age" of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry. Since the middle of the sixteenth century, Jewish communities in Poland and Lithuania had encountered a long period of significant consolidation. General and local privileges secured the legal status of the communities and exempted them from municipal jurisdiction, assigning to rabbinical adjudication the bulk of litigation among Jews. The legal autonomy granted to Jewish communities allowed for the emergence of a complex structure of communal institutions and private associations. In 1539, the aristocracy succeeded in securing jurisdiction over Jews living in private towns, effectively removing these communities from royal jurisdiction. The alliance between Jews and nobility was further deepened after the Union of Lublin in 1569, joining the territories of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania under a single sovereign, with Jews playing an important role in the economic endeavors of the Polish aristocracy in the vast stretches of Lithuanian territories. They functioned as leaseholders, merchants, credit providers, and artisans, and more generally as intermediaries between the rural and the urban economic spheres. As the population in most Jewish communities grew, religious and everyday life flourished based on the principles of Jewish religious law, or Halakhah, codified in this period in the *Shulḥan Arukh* by the Sephardic author Joseph Karo (1488–1575) and amended by the leading halakhic authority of Ashkenazic Jewry, Moses Isserles (1520–572) from Kraków. Around 1580, the Council of Four Lands (*va'ad arba aratsot*), a supra-communal body representing Polish-Jewish communities, emerged, with responsibility for the appropriation of taxes among the communities in the various regions and districts. In 1623, the Lithuanian Jewish communities seceded from this gathering of community representatives and formed a Lithuanian Council (*va'ad medinat lite*). Instigated by religious agitation as well as socio-economic competition,

anti-Jewish violence, as well as legal persecutions on the basis of blood libels, occurred throughout the period, but in no case undermined the overall security of Jewish communities.

The process of consolidation for these Jewish communities came to an end in the middle of the seventeenth century.[1] This reversal is encapsulated in three events and developments. The first is the joint Cossack and Tartar uprising against Polish–Lithuanian rule under the leadership of Bogdan Khmelnytsky in 1648. Directed at the emerging Polish hegemony in the southern territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, this insurrection by the disenfranchised local nobility led to massive violence, especially against Jews, considered both as allies of the Polish intruders and as religious enemies. In the course of the uprising, thousands of Jews were killed, and many of their communities devastated. Known in Hebrew as *gzerot takh-v-tat* by the Hebrew numerical value of its dates, it became the watershed mark for the end of the so-called Golden Age of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry, epitomized in the idealized representation by Nathan Hannover, *Yaven metsulah* [Abyss of Despair] (Venice, 1652/3). The author presents Polish Jewry as a law-abiding, charitable, pious community with strong institutions and without conflicts. The central trope of the account is the martyrdom of the many victims who chose to be killed rather than to give up the faith of their fathers.[2] Published while war and destruction still ravaged Polish and Lithuanian territories, the purpose was to exhort readers to follow in the footsteps of this ideal – now destroyed – community: to study the Holy Scriptures, to abide by the law, and to be charitable to fellow Jews.

The second development marking the end of the Polish-Jewish "Golden Age" was the rise of Muscovy. This was a decisive factor in the demise of Poland–Lithuania as the hegemonial power in the region, much helped by the new political alliance between the Muscovite Empire and the insurgent Cossack nobility under Khmelnytsky. The massive Swedish military incursions into Poland in the wake of the Thirty Years War (1618–48),

[1] The most important surveys on the history of the Jews in eastern Europe, including assessments of the developments between 1650 and 1815, are Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772–1881* (Philadelphia, 2005); Heiko Haumann, *A History of East European Jews* (Budapest, 2002); and, most recently, Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia,* vol. I: *1350–1881* (Oxford, 2010).

[2] Edward Fram, "Creating a Tale of Martyrdom in Tulczyn, 1648," in Elisheva Carlebach *et al.*, eds.), *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Brandeis, 1998), 89–112, offers a comparison of accounts of the events by Hannover and other authors, and their intention to edify their readers and strengthen their commitment to religious observance. See also Joel Raba, *Between Remembrance and Denial: The Fate of the Jews in the Wars of the Polish Commonwealth during the Mid Seventeenth Century as Shown in Contemporary Writings and Historical Research* (Boulder, 1995).

the so-called inundation (Polish: *potop*), as well as the war between Russia and Poland (1655–8), also contributed to this development. In contrast to central Europe, where the Peace of Westphalia (1648) defined the rules of engagement between commonwealths of different religious allegiance, eastern Europe entered a phase of destabilization. Although defeated during the siege of Vienna in 1683, the Ottoman Empire continuously grew through incursions into the insufficiently secured borderlands of Christian commonwealths in southeastern Europe.

Transregional communication between Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire and other European centers of Jewish settlement contributed to the third context shaping the development of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry in the period between the mid seventeenth century and the early nineteenth, which is religious diversification. The news spreading from Jerusalem in 1665 that Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76), a Jew from Smyrna, had been revealed as the Jewish messiah would resonate profoundly in neighboring Poland–Lithuania. Not only would the false messiah find numerous followers here, but the Sabbatean movement significantly contributed to the spreading of esoteric teachings among the Jews of Poland–Lithuania – the later conversion of Sabbatai Zevi to Islam in 1667 notwithstanding. The movement's popularity eventually helped to fuel the Hasidic movement, a movement of spiritual renewal founded by Israel ben Eliezer (*c.* 1700–60), better known as the Ba'al Shem Tov ("master of the Good name"; acronym: "Besht"). Gaining momentum in the second and third generations of the movement, Hasidism represented a major challenge to the established rabbinical elite as well as to communal leadership. By the end of the period under consideration in this chapter, the Hasidic movement had established itself as a key influence in many of the territories of former Poland–Lithuania, with the notable exception of the Prussian partition. Another later echo of the Sabbatean heresy was the sectarian movement under the leadership of Jakob Frank (*c.* 1721–91), established in the 1750s. Several thousand followers of Frank, called Contra-Talmudists at the beginning of the movement, converted to Christianity in 1759. The Frankists, as they have been known since the nineteenth century, formed a tightly knit community of new Christians, fully belonging neither to Judaism nor to Christianity.

At the end of the period under consideration, the Jews of former Poland–Lithuania lived in a dramatically changed political landscape. The Commonwealth itself had disappeared from the map after the partitions by neighboring Prussia, Austria, and Russia in 1772, 1793, and 1795. The hitherto largest Jewish community in the history of the European diaspora, numbering around 750,000 people, were now inhabitants of four administrative entities. In 1815, Prussia created the province of Poznan (Preußische Provinz Posen), the Habsburg Empire invented the Kingdom

of Galicia-Lodomeria, and Tsarist Russia delineated the Kingdom of Poland (or Congress Poland, as it was often called), attached to the Empire by a personal union. The vast territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, with the largest number of former Polish–Lithuanian Jews, were annexed to the Russian Empire as its "Northwestern Provinces." The latter constituted an important part of the so-called Pale of Settlement, established formally in 1804, which combined the former Lithuanian territories with vast stretches of land to the south conquered from the Ottoman Empire in the course of the eighteenth century.

In addition, Polish–Lithuanian Jewry underwent substantial internal changes. The hegemonic position of the leadership of the local community, the *kahal*, as well as rabbinical jurisdiction, came to be challenged. Institutional petrification, the abuses of oligarchic rule, and the venality of the rabbinic office had led to serious disaffection in the communities. Throughout the eighteenth century, more and more Jews turned to non-Jewish courts, thus undermining rabbinical jurisdiction, often perceived as a mere tool of the local oligarchy. The abolition of the Council of Four Lands in 1764 deprived the traditional Jewish elites in Poland of an important instrument of communication and coordination.

At the same time, the emergence of Hasidism and its growing popularity attest to the attraction of a new spiritual orientation. In contrast to the traditional community, constituted through local hierarchies and institutions, Hasidic communities were based on the voluntary commitment of an individual Jew to a leader – the *tzaddik*. Although Hasidism in itself was highly observant in matters of religious law, this new focus on individual decision-making contributed to what some historians have called an "inherent modernization." Additionally, in the context of the debates surrounding the status of the Jews during the so-called Four-Year Sejm (1788–92) in Warsaw, aiming at reforms of the threatened Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, new Jewish voices were heard: rabbis functioning as political representatives; enlightened authors arguing in favor of cultural transformation; informal groups of Jewish notables pursuing goals such as the opening of the Polish capital to Jewish settlement. In contrast to the situation in central or western Europe, proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment were less visible in Poland–Lithuania. Nowhere in Europe were their numbers very high. However, in the dynamic urban centers of the west, like Amsterdam, Paris, or London, their voices resonated more deeply and their proposals found greater leverage than in the east, with only a very few – though remarkable – exceptions.[3]

[3] David S. Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov* (New York, 1995).

These reconfigurations notwithstanding, Polish–Lithuanian Jewry would remain a culturally and religiously highly cohesive community. With the notable exception of the followers of Jakob Frank, conversions of Jews to Christianity or other faith communities were rare occurrences, and religious observance remained the norm throughout the period under consideration. Yiddish continued to be the unchallenged vernacular of the greatest number of Jews in eastern Europe, with the exception of Greater Poland, where German – not least because of the linguistic proximity of German and Yiddish – had already started to take root as the local vernacular early in the 1800s. The absence in eastern Europe of what Jacob Katz has defined for more western Jewries as the "semineutral society" – which allowed for a limited integration of Jews into urban society – as well as the strength of anti-Jewish attitudes among the local non-Jewish population certainly contributed to the longevity of this cohesiveness.

JEWISH AUTONOMY IN THE POLISH–LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH: THE PRACTICE OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Throughout the early modern period, the entity governing almost all aspects of Jewish life in Poland–Lithuania was the individual community. It controlled intra-Jewish jurisdiction, financial and civil matters, as well as religious institutions and functions. These far-reaching prerogatives were guaranteed through privileges and charters issued by Polish and Lithuanian kings and princes, who recognized that the granting of a generous autonomy, together with economic freedoms and guarantees of personal security, would encourage Jews to found new communities. The first such far-reaching privilege was granted by Boleslaw the Pious in Kalisz in 1264. The leadership in the community lay with its governing body, the *kahal*. It was formed in a complex process of nominating honorary officers from among the upper echelons of the tax-paying male population in a community. This selection process would favor the emergence of deeply entrenched local oligarchies, exerting a significant degree of control over the paid officers of the community, including rabbis, spokesmen (*shtadlanim*), cantors, ritual slaughterers, circumcisers, and sextons. These officers and functionaries could claim greater religious authority and knowledge of Jewish law than the oligarchs, but from the standpoint of actual governance they had to accept the supremacy of the civic leadership.[4] Toward the end of the period

[4] See Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004), 96, for an example of civic leaders asserting their precedence in the proceedings of the Council of Four Lands.

under consideration in this chapter, these oligarchies were challenged politically and spiritually from both within and without. Thus, decisions taken by the regional Councils, as well as the Council of Four Lands and the Lithuanian Jewish Council, concerning taxation, limited the room of the individual community to maneuver, even if the Councils did not have the prerogative to impose their will directly on the individual *kahal*: "[The Council's] regulations had no authority of their own and had to be accepted by each local community before they were binding on individual Jews."[5] To achieve autonomous status through recognition by the sovereign would be the strategic objective of any new Jewish settlement. The autonomy of the individual community was jealously guarded and a source of pride. Throughout the period under consideration here, the individual community maintained much of its autonomy and remained the most important arena in shaping political culture and providing social standing.[6]

On the local level, this far-reaching autonomy was challenged by the landlord, by the hierarchies of the Christian town dwellers, as well as by the Church. The landlord wielded considerable political power, and could impose his will – for example, concerning membership in the *kahal*, or the rabbinate – on the Jewish community as much as on the local Christian community. However, the nobility were also the main people to benefit from the specific economic role of the Jews as intermediaries between the rural population and the towns, and also from Jews functioning as leaseholders of noble lands and as providers of financial services. This economic partnership provided the Jews with a certain degree of protection from arbitrary rulings. Not least due to ongoing economic competition, Christian town dwellers and their administrative hierarchy never came to terms with the exclusion of the Jewish population from their jurisdiction, and continuously attempted to contain the scope of Jewish autonomy.[7] The frequent and widespread

[5] Adam Teller, "Rabbis Without a Function? The Polish Rabbinate and the Council of Four Lands in the 16th–18th Centuries," in J. Wertheimer, ed., *Jewish Spiritual Leadership: Image and Reality* (New York, 2004), 371–400, esp. 376.

[6] The autonomy of the eastern European Jewish community has been investigated since the outset of academic historical research, focusing both on the local level as well as on the supra-communal features like the regional councils. Among the most important source documentations and analyses are Jacob Goldberg, ed., *Jewish Privileges in the Polish Commonwealth: Charters of Rights Granted to Jewish Communities in Poland–Lithuania in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 2001); for recent surveys with further references, see Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 79–98, and Anna Michałowska-Mycielska: *The Jewish Community: Authority and Social Control in Poznań and Swarzędz, 1650–1793* (Wrocław, 2008).

[7] Gershon David Hundert, *The Jews in a Polish Private Town: The Case of Opatów in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1992); Moshe Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate–Jewish*

practice of legal agreements between representatives of the Christian burghers and Jewish communities has only recently been discussed as an important factor in shaping the legal relations between Jews and non-Jews, while also adding to the relative security of the individual Jewish community.[8] Of major relevance in this context was the influence of the Catholic Church and its hierarchies. The relationship between Church and Jewish communities was complex: individual clergy played a major role in the persecution of Jews, e.g. in the context of ritual murder accusations. However, as an institution, the Catholic Church rejected these general accusations and also benefited, in a comparable way to the nobility, from Jewish economic activities, a factor further enhanced through intricate financial cooperation with monasteries and other Church institutions that lent considerable amounts of money to Jewish communities.[9]

The institutional stability and legal security of most Jewish communities in Poland–Lithuania resulted in the emergence of a considerable degree of experience in civic and religious leadership. Both notions need some basic clarification. Each community was based on the agreement of a certain number of male adult Jews to found a community. These were based on by-laws, which in the case of Poland–Lithuania go back to the re-establishment of the Ashkenazic community in German territories after the devastations of the Crusades, and are known as the *takkanot shum* ("by-laws of the communities" of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz), as devised by a series of synods in the twelfth century.[10] Their oath constituted the community as a holy entity (*kehillah kedosha*). Thus, as the governance of such a community is based in Jewish law, it is inextricably linked to the Jewish religious tradition. While expertise in this tradition clearly lay with officiating communal rabbis and judges, the community leadership did not delegate the responsibility for running the community to the rabbis. Thus, communal leadership is only imprecisely described as "lay" leadership, a notion that seems appropriate for the much

Relations in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

[8] François Guesnet, "Agreements Between Neighbours: The 'Ugody' as a Source on Jewish–Christian Relations in Early Modern Poland," *Jewish History* 24 (2010), 3–4, 257–70.

[9] Judith Kalik, "Patterns of Contact Between the Catholic Church and the Jews in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth: The Jewish Debts," in A. Teller, ed., *Studies on the History of the Jews in Old Poland*, Scripta Hierosolomitana 38 (Jerusalem, 1998), 102–22.

[10] Adam Teller, "Telling the Difference: Some Comparative Perspectives on the Jews' Legal Status in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Holy Roman Empire," in Adam Teller, Magda Teter, and Antony Polonsky, eds., *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 22: *Social and Cultural Boundaries in Pre-Modern Poland* (Oxford, 2010), 109–41, esp. 109–14.

clearer distinction between common and ecclesiastic law in Christian society. Therefore, preference should be given to a term that reflects the responsibility for their fellow Jews taken by communal leaders, which is best described as religiously informed civic responsibility.

Regarding both the degree of differentiation and institutional continuity, the Polish–Lithuanian Jewish community remains unique in European Jewish history. Responsibility for the community administration lay with the honorary officers, the most prominent of whom were the three to five *parnasim* ("presidents") or *roshim* ("heads"). They would take turns every month in order to avoid too heavy a burden on the individual officer, who would be prevented from pursuing his business in the usual way while occupying this office. As with all communal officers, they would be chosen from among a limited number of candidates who qualified by virtue of their status as respected, married, learned males who were also prosperous and tax-paying community members. The larger the individual community, the higher the number of offices delegated to respected members. They would be responsible for the Talmud Torah School for the children of poor families, the care of the sick, and charitable funds in general. Safeguarding community records as well as the community funds would be honorary offices, as would the role of tax assessors who fixed the amount an individual household would be expected to contribute to taxes and other expenditures. A large community like Poznan would boast more than 100 honorary officers, among whom were also supervisors of the fairs and the slaughterhouses, as well as court assessors and adjudicators.[11]

All these roles would be assigned during the intermediate days of Passover by a small group of electors (in some instances called *borerim*, from the Hebrew for "to select"), whose names were usually drawn from a ballot box containing the names of qualified community members – Poznan and Vilna are two examples of communities which had a fixed group of electors. These electors would then choose from among the limited group of eligible community members, defined by their wealth and standing in the community. It seems misleading to speak of elections when discussing this nomination procedure for *kahal* officers, as they were the outcome of negotiating power relations in the upper echelons of a given community rather than a vote by a sizable proportion of its members. This tradition of nominating community officers significantly contributed to blocking turnover in the communal leadership and to the ossification of communal rule.[12]

[11] Michałowska-Mycielska, *The Jewish Community*, 31–80.

[12] These procedures, as well as the communal offices, would slightly differ from place to place; however, the overall picture is highly homogeneous.

The grip of established elite families on communal power extended beyond the realm of community governance as the *kahal* efficiently controlled most other spheres of life, beginning with control over the paid functionaries of the community, which included the rabbi, the kosher slaughterers (*shoḥet*), the cantor (*hazan*) and the synagogue beadle (*shamash*), the circumciser (*mohel*), the scribe or secretary (*sofer*), the tax collector (*goveh*), and the teacher in the Talmud Torah School (*melamed*). Only larger communities would be able to afford a permanent spokesman or intercessor (*shtadlan*) and additional personnel, e.g. medical personnel for the communal sick care or a small hospital. In most communities, paid functions would often be combined in one individual – for instance, the records of the community of Tykocin (Yiddish: Tiktin) would frequently designate one individual to function as *shtadlan u-shamash*, i.e. as spokesperson and to provide a variety of services to the community elders.[13] Since the *kahal* employed the rabbi, it exerted considerable control over him and thus also over Jewish jurisdiction as a whole. Furthermore, membership in the community, any contractual agreement between Jews and non-Jews, and leases of houses and trades all required a communal approval (*hazaka*), issued by the community board.

Control of the *kahal* extended also to the sphere of voluntary associations or fraternities (*ḥevrot*), a central component in religious and charitable activities in any given community. Membership in these fraternities was sometimes defined by the specific trade of its members, and thus can be compared to the guilds in the Christian community. In other cases, the purpose was the study of Holy Scriptures, charitable purposes like care for the sick, or providing dowries for destitute young women. Their activities would equally require consent of the *kahal*, with the exception of the burial society or *ḥevra kadisha*.[14] As the latter was responsible for the acquisition of a burial ground and the ongoing administration of the cemetery, as well as the burials, in combination with the centrality of rituals pertaining to death and burial in Judaism, the informal status of the burial society was even higher than of membership in the *kahal*. Membership in this society was restricted to the most respected male members of the community, and would usually come at a later stage than membership in the *kahal* and constitute an additional center of authority in a given community.[15] This would prove of

[13] Mordehai Nadav, *Pinkas Kehal Tiktin*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1997), here No. 582 (I, 416) as an example.

[14] The best overall analysis of this network of voluntary associations remains to this day Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1772–1844* (New York, 1943).

[15] As it was responsible for the ritual cleansing of the corpses, women – mostly the wives of members – would form an affiliate *ḥevrat nashim* to perform these services for deceased women, without, however, having any say in the administration of the society.

great significance in the course of the dismantlement of Jewish autonomy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the authorities targeted the *kahal* as the center of Jewish governance, and informal communal authority would shift to the local *ḥevrot ha-kadisha*.

The wide scope of autonomy granted to Jewish communities, as well as the almost unlimited legal, religious, and economic control of the communal leadership over its members, created sharp vertical hierarchies with very limited perspectives of social mobility for the large majority of Jews. In this respect, the Jewish community did not differ significantly from the surrounding non-Jewish communities, with the notable exception that it did not know serfdom. These petrified, steep hierarchies need to be taken into account when assessing the impact of enthusiast or dissident religious movements. Thus, as in other European regions, the promise of messianic redemption through Sabbatai Zevi fell on fertile ground in Poland–Lithuania. At the same time, it was also partly due to the strength of traditional institutions and allegiances that, following Sabbatai's apostasy, only a small group of "believers" persisted in maintaining their faith in his messianic mission and joined sectarian Sabbatean groups. Later, it was the attraction of an alternative vision of Jewish community that led to the growing success of the Hasidic movement. Its demand for spiritual renewal, underpinned by a claim to leadership, was intended to create community anew, not destroy it altogether. An unintended consequence, however, was the considerable loss in standing of the local community as the core unit of Jewish life. Two additional factors contributed to the rabbinate's declining authority in the Polish–Lithuanian Jewish community and thus to a further undermining of communal autonomy. First, the two-tiered appointment process by the establishment in the Jewish communities and the non-Jewish authorities contributed to the nomination of ill-equipped but affluent candidates. Second, as a consequence of the sustained competition among civil and religious leaders, the latter tended to overuse the ban of excommunication (*ḥerem*). This tool was also applied at the behest of non-Jewish authorities to instil compliance, e.g. with taxation, a fact which fueled widespread frustration with rabbinical judicial prerogatives and induced increasing numbers of Jews to turn to non-Jewish adjudication.[16]

[16] Adam Teller, "Rabbinate: The Rabbinate before 1800," in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven, 2008) (henceforth *YEJEE*), 1489–92; Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatean Controversies* (New York, 1900), 11–12. More generally on the crisis of rabbinical authority as a factor in the transformation of early modern Jewish culture, see David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010), 133–58.

A very telling example of the growing imbalance between inflexible *kahal* rule and the frustrated aspirations of the wider community can be found in the drawn-out conflict in the Vilna community that occurred toward the end of the period under consideration in this chapter. The first phase of conflict between the local rabbi and the community dragged on from 1762 to 1777, and flared up again in 1781, when the lower tiers of the tax-paying community members protested against the agreements reached between the rabbi and the *kahal*. Both sides attempted to strengthen their leverage by forging alliances with representatives of the aristocracy. The duration of the conflict, which lasted until 1790, as well as the unwillingness of either side to compromise, exposed its acrimony. The *kahal* decided to abstain in future from nominating a communal rabbi and to symbolically place a stone on the rabbi's chair in the Great Synagogue.[17] This would be the first of many large communities that proved unable to agree on a chief rabbi. Vilna can also provide an example of the prominent role that could be played by leading talmudic scholars who would not themselves seek communal office, in Eliahu ben Shlomo Zalman (1720–97), the Gaon of Vilna.[18] This holds especially true for the heads of the schools of talmudic studies (*yeshivot*). Earning their livelihoods as head teachers through students' tuitions, they valued their independence from the communal leadership, as expressed in the apocryphal statement ascribed to Yaacov Kovner (1797–1883), head of a *yeshiva* in Kaunas-Slobodka at the end of the period under consideration here, rejecting the offer to become chief rabbi in Vilna: "I want to be the head of my own house, and don't want others to have any say over me."[19]

Their relative similarity in legal status notwithstanding, the status of Jewish communities depended primarily on the number and wealth of its members. In the period we are looking at, Poznan, Kraków, and Vilna maintained their role as leading Jewish communities in Poland–Lithuania. Numerous mid-sized communities would stand out as regional centers for a variety of reasons: Lublin, an important center of Jewish learning, was also situated on the trade route to Lwow. Also, the highest royal court of appeal of the Polish Crown was located here, and notables and *shtadlanim* time and again attempted to rescue Jewish defendants in ritual murder trials. Also, one of the two annual meetings of the delegates to the Council of Four Lands would take place here; the other convened in Jarosław, a small community, because of its important trade fair. The capital, Warsaw,

[17] Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 112–17.
[18] Immanuel Etkes, *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and His Image* (Berkeley, 2002).
[19] Shmuel Leyb Tsitron, *Shtadlonim. Interesante idisher tipn fun no'etn avar* (Varshe, 1926), 316.

was off-limits for Jews throughout the period under consideration, with efforts by Jews to achieve their readmission intensifying in the last decades of the eighteenth century, though in fact thousands of Jews had already found ways to settle in the capital.[20] Around ninety other towns in Poland–Lithuania restricted Jewish settlement, sometimes based on royal privileges "*de non tolerandis Judaeis*."[21] In many cases, however, Jews would be able to circumvent these prohibitions and settle in property belonging to nobility, or in neighborhoods adjacent to the town boundaries.[22]

Institutional and lasting supra-communal representation of Jewish leadership emerged in European Jewish history in two commonwealths: Moravia and Poland–Lithuania. The original purpose of these councils, emerging in both cases in the late sixteenth century, was the appropriation and collection of the taxes payable to the crown, a lump sum which needed to be divided up among regions and communities. As already noted, in Poland–Lithuania, two councils emerged: the Council of Four Lands in the Polish case, and the Lithuanian Council for the territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, seceding from the former in 1623. These gatherings – in the case of the Council of Four Lands, biannual – of representatives of regions and communities contributed significantly to the cohesion of Polish and Lithuanian Jewry, as they allowed for the constitution of densely knitted networks of communication. The delegates were mostly members of a local *kahal*, but also rabbis – as all matters of the internal community administration would pertain to Jewish law, their expertise was indispensable. Nevertheless, few of the surviving resolutions of the Council were signed by rabbis, and some resolutions would define the civic leaders as *rashey medinot* ("heads of the regions") and the experts in Jewish law as *rashey yeshibot* ("heads of academies").[23] As mentioned earlier, the communal delegates in the Council of Four Lands emphasized their precedence over these legal counselors. Yet the inverse also applied, as historian Adam Teller notes: "while Polish rabbis accepted the ordinances (*taqqanot*) of the lay

[20] For the beginnings of the re-establishment of an important Jewish demographic in Warsaw, see Hannah Węgrzynek, "Illegal Immigrants: The Jews of Warsaw 1527–1792," in Glenn Dynner and François Guesnet, eds., *Warsaw – the Jewish Metropolis* (Leiden, 2015), 19–41.

[21] For the most recent edition of sources pertaining to the Council of Four Lands, see Jakub Goldberg and Adam Kaźmierczyk, *Sejm Czterech Ziem, źródła / Council of Four Lands: Sources* (Warsaw, 2011) (with English summaries).

[22] The best-known case is Kazimierz, the Jewish quarter of the former Polish capital Kraków. For maps of Jewish communities in Poland–Lithuania at the end of the eighteenth century, see *Atlas historii Żydów polskich* (Warsaw, 2010), 130–5.

[23] Edward Fram, *Ideals Face Reality* (Cincinnati, 1997), 44.

councils and quoted them in their responsa as part of the realities of contemporary life, the *taqqanot* did not represent legal precedents for Polish rabbis and did not enter the realm of contemporary Jewish jurisprudence."[24] Several additional regional councils emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to the spreading of Jewish settlement in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Neither non-Jewish nor Jewish records provide evidence of a legal basis for the functioning of these councils, which means that they most likely went back to informal meetings of community representatives agreeing on tax appropriation.

Beyond their central task of tax appropriation, these gatherings would indeed allow for other activities. Resolutions of the Council of Four Lands concerning religious life had considerable impact, as did its interventions concerning Jewish/non-Jewish relations. Thus, the councils would issue sumptuary regulations and intervene on a number of issues with the non-Jewish authorities, including the Church. Although the Councils' remit was restricted to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, its authority in matters of Jewish self-government went beyond the Commonwealth's borders. Thus, in 1622, the Council of Four Lands was invited by a group of community elders from Frankfurt-am-Main to support its position against a new ordinance for the establishment of the community board. Although the Council of Four Lands did not strive to rule on matters beyond its regional remit, similar requests for arbitration on communal and administrative matters reached Poland on several occasions.[25] In the context of the Sabbatean crisis and its echo in the Frankist movement, delegates to the Council of Four Lands coordinated measures to be taken against the dissidents.[26] It also functioned as an essential agency in defending Jews against accusations of ritual murder and host desecration. Thus, it delegated intercessors, or *shtadlanim*, to request interventions from the Holy See against such accusations in 1654. In 1710, the Council intervened with the godmother of Jan Serafinowicz, a convert from Judaism who repeated the blood libel and claimed to have participated in a ritual murder. In this case, the Council requested a public disputation to refute these accusations, realizing that Serafinowicz's claims would be particularly damaging. The request was granted, but the disputation did not take place, as the calumniator refused to participate.[27] As a

[24] Adam Teller, "Councils," in *YEJEE*, I, 352–7, also for the following quote.
[25] Moshe Rosman, "The Authority of the Council of Four Lands outside Poland–Lithuania," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol.22.
[26] Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*, 191–3.
[27] Pawel Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement* (Philadelphia, 2011), 102.

consequence of two exceptionally gruesome cases of ritual murder accusations in the mid eighteenth century, in Żytomierz in 1753, and in Jampol in 1756, the Council sent a surviving defendant, Asher Zelig, as an intercessor to Rome, in order to attain another missive from the Holy See about the unfoundedness of the calumniations.[28] It also can be assumed that the Council was responsible for the publication in 1763 – just one year before its abolition – of a collection of documents of non-Jewish origin refuting the ritual murder and host desecration accusations, entitled *Documenta Judaeos in Polonia concernienta* [Documents on Matters Concerning the Jews in Poland].[29] It has been observed that this publication was the first attempt by the Polish–Lithuanian Jewish leadership to engage with the enlightened non-Jewish public, submitting materials for the purpose of reasoned debate about the ritual murder accusation. Despite this broad range of matters dealt with by the delegates to the Jewish Councils in Poland and Lithuania during their gatherings, the frequent references in historiography to the councils as legislative bodies or parliaments are misleading. In contrast to the Estates, for example, but also in contrast to the individual Jewish communities, the Jewish Councils had no constitutional standing in the wider fabric of the Commonwealth, being recognized only as an advisory board to the treasury. Also, no formal transfer of power from the communities to the Councils established the latter as a sovereign body within the Jewish polity. Nevertheless, their long existence and their significance for supra-communal cohesion cannot be overstated.

The gradual shift in political agency away from established forms of intercession to new forms of involvement became more visible one generation after the abolition of the Council of Four Lands (1764). During the deliberations of the so-called Four-Year Sejm (1788–92), around 120 intercessors and authors representing the interests of Jewish communities pursued a wide range of agendas, as the delegates to the Sejm debated the legal and societal status of the town burghers, peasants, and Jews in the Commonwealth. Continuing traditional forms of intercession, behind-the-scenes attempts were made to enlist, on behalf of Polish Jews, support from the reform-friendly sovereign, King Józef August Poniatowski (1732–98). On the other hand, and pursuing a form of public advocacy

[28] Zenon Guldon and Jacek Wijaczka, "The Accusation of Ritual Murder in Poland, 1500–1800," in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 10: *Jews in Early Modern Poland* (Portland, OR, 1997), 99–140, esp. 101; Maciejko, *Mixed Multitude*, 102.

[29] Maciejko, *Mixed Multitude*, 125. Among the published documents were a privilege of 1592 by the Polish King Zygmunt III rejecting these accusations, and a letter from 1759 by the Prefect of the Holy Office, Cardinal Corsini, to the new nuncio in Warsaw, Bishop Visconti.

inaugurated by the Council of Four Lands shortly before its abolition, Jews would involve themselves in the debate about the status of the Jewish community by publishing pamphlets – some advocating, others rejecting calls for a cultural and religious transformation of the Jews, and often taking up similar debates in other commonwealths.[30]

Thus, the reforms in the Habsburg Empire under Joseph II, the debate instigated in Prussia by Christian Wilhelm Dohm and Moses Mendelssohn about the "civic improvement of the Jews," and, last but not least, the French Revolution resulting in the Emancipation of the French Jewry, were absorbed and discussed in Poland–Lithuania, and taken up by a broad spectrum of authors. The most significant outcome of the Sejm's deliberations, the first written constitution in European history (May 3, 1791), would, however, fail to resolve the most pressing legal inequalities, including those affecting the populous Jewish community, demonstrating the limitations of these new forms of Jewish public involvement. The Polish reform efforts did, however, hasten the second partition of the Commonwealth in 1793, which led to the Kościuszko Uprising in 1794, an attempt to reverse this course of events. During the insurrection, Berek Joselewicz (1764–1809), a Jew of Lithuanian background residing in Warsaw, formed a Jewish armed unit joining the irredentist forces defending the Polish capital against the advancing Russian troups.[31] Both an "adventurer and an activist," Joselewicz in the nineteenth century represented yet another innovation in Jewish involvement in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and became an icon for Polish Jews pursuing the ideal of integration into the Polish polity.[32]

The wide scope of communal autonomy for the Jews of Poland–Lithuania allowed for the emergence of a unique Jewish political culture, based on a constitutionally secure and highly differentiated local community. The formation of a supra-communal network of representation in the Polish and Lithuanian Councils contributed to a considerable degree of cultural, religious, and political cohesiveness. Jews formed a highly visible part of small and large urban settlements, integrated into the non-Jewish polity by multiple legal bonds. The exceptionally strong constitutional position of the autonomous community also contributed to the growing disaffection of large segments of the Jewish population with its leadership,

[30] See the pioneering source edition by Artur Eisenbach *et al., Materiały do dziejów Sejmu Czteroletniego*, vol. VI (Wrocław, 1969); about these pamphlets, see François Guesnet, "Politik der Vormoderne – Shtadlanut am Vorabend der polnischen Teilungen," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 1 (2002), 235–55.

[31] François Guesnet, "Berek Joselewicz," in *YEJEE*, I, 830–1.

[32] See, most recently, Derek Penslar, *Jews and the Military: A History* (Princeton, 2013), 56–8.

as internal hierarchies and oligarchic rule undermined social dynamism and change. As will be argued below, this disaffection seems to have made an important contribution to the religious dynamic, especially in the eighteenth century.

RELIGION AND COMMUNITY

It has been argued that the seventeenth century appears in the history of the European Jewish diaspora as a period of transition "from primarily oral traditions to written structures for conveying tradition" – the result of "the growing circulation of printed texts accompanying an ever-widening circle of readers."[33] The availability of halakhic literature in print reshaped higher talmudic learning, allowing the *yeshivot* (institutions which allowed for the systematic study of the Talmud and the commentaries about it, as well as of the practice of adjudication) to accommodate a steady number of students on various levels of instruction. *Yeshiva* students were admitted on the basis of an agreement between the local rabbinate, the head of the *yeshiva*, and the *kahal*, with the community as a whole securing tution and maintenance for the students.

The successful graduates of these talmudic schools – a small minority of all who studied at these institutions – would go on to become rabbis, religious leaders, and judges, and thus to maintain halakhic standards for the Jewish communities as a whole, and for the community administration, or *kahal*. It has been argued that this close connection between the maintenance of the *yeshivot* through the communities and the central role of their graduates in the religious and political life of the communities has been a hallmark of the Polish–Lithuanian Jewish community, and was well established in the period under consideration.[34] The *yeshivot* also significantly contributed to the emergence of a network of rabbinical leaders across eastern Europe and beyond. Once the *yeshivot* in Poland–Lithuania emerged as the leading institutions for talmudic study, students joined them from across the Commonwealth, as well as from German lands, from Bohemia and Moravia, and farther away. The graduates came to occupy positions of authority across the region, and indeed throughout the Ashkenazic world.

[33] Avrie Bar-Levav, "Ritualization of Jewish Life and Death in the Early Modern Period," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 47 (2002), 69–82; more generally on the impact of print on the dissemination of religious learning among Jews in the early modern period, see Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 99–132.

[34] Elchanan Reiner, "Yeshiva: The Yeshiva before 1800," in *YEJEE*, II, 2051–5, who discussses the *yeshivot* in Poznan, Kraków, Lublin, Ostróg, and Lwów as leading institutions for the period before 1800.

The curriculum in the individual *yeshivot* depended on their heads, who might put varying emphasis on esoteric readings like the Book of Zohar in relation to traditional halakhic texts. Until the seventeenth century, the esoteric or kabbalistic approach to the Jewish tradition had been a marker of intellectual distinction and excellence. The seventeenth century brought about significant shifts in this respect, as esoteric approaches to the Jewish tradition became increasingly widespread. But legal codes were also regarded by some scholars as problematic. For instance, Joel Sirkes (1561–1640), the leading talmudic scholar at the beginning of the period under consideration, believed the growing impact of the *Shulḥan Arukh* as a compressed version of the complex legal precepts of the Talmud threatened a true understanding of this tradition. Rejecting the reduction of Jewish law through codification, he insisted on the precedence of engaging in an interpretation of the entire talmudic, mishnaic, and rabbinical traditions. In contrast, Berekhyah Berakh ben Yitshak (d. after 1665), an influential commentator and preacher based in Kraków and a contemporary of Sirkes, warned against the "empty brilliance" of the intricate talmudic dialectics which had emerged in the sixteenth century as a marker of Polish–Lithuanian Jewish learning, and which later became known as *pilpul*.[35] The growing prominence of *pilpul* in Polish–Lithuanian *yeshivot* has been understood as a sign of their "academicization" (Elchanan Reiner), paving the way for the success of a new tradition of *yeshiva* learning more focused on textual commentary, which would emerge in Lithuanian lands in the nineteenth century, not least as a reaction to the growing impact of Hasidism.

The decline of the *yeshivot*, already evident by the second half of the seventeenth century, was balanced by the growing prominence of the *bet ha-midrash* or study house, dedicated to the study of the Scriptures by the local educated elite. Its institutional growth reflects an increasing religious literacy among larger numbers of Jews – almost exclusively men – and the declining role of religious virtuosi of exceptional status.[36] Here, talmudic knowledge was conveyed in an individualized setting, above all through tutoring, and without a formalized curriculum. It might be argued that the overall increase in the number of places for Torah and talmudic study, the lower degree of formal instruction required for this type of learning, as well as a growing availability of printed materials, contributed considerably to a

[35] Marc Saperstein, "Berekhyah Berakh ben Yitshak," in *YEJEE*, I, 154; the term *pilpul* became a trope in identifying and ostracizing *yeshiva*-based learning in Poland–Lithuania for many generations to come: see Jay M. Harris, "Talmudic Study," in *YEJEE*, II, 1836–41.

[36] Elchanan Reiner, "Bet ha-Midrash," in *YEJEE*, I, 173–5.

more individualized and esoteric understanding of Jewish religious tradition and practice, a development that may have prepared the way for the kind of spirituality proposed by the Hasidic movement.

Among the growing number of religious publications were also collections of prayers, supplications, and printed explanations of religious precepts of everyday life, which contributed to the formalization of ritual among larger numbers of Jews. This literature provided templates and guidance for ordinary members of the community when organizing voluntary associations – the above-mentioned fraternities (*ḥevrot*). These pious associations committed themselves to religious services, charity, or education, and were often organized like guilds, among members of a craft or trade. Their dense network in Polish–Lithuanian Jewish communities became a hallmark of eastern Ashkenazic civilization, and would remain a defining factor well into the twentieth century.[37] This shift was complemented by the growing number of women who received informal religious instruction, and gained access to religious writings and knowledge about religious ritual.[38] This religious instruction for women was provided informally, in families or through mentoring, and thus religious authorities and communal leaders strove to secure religious and moral guidance for women, with the implicit agenda of maintaining the traditionally gendered boundaries of religious expertise and practice. From the mid sixteenth century, publications which offered instructions on moral conduct and everyday religious practice – authored mostly by men – grew in number in both western and eastern Ashkenaz. It was at this time that collections of supplications (*tkhines*) became a well-known genre of explicitly religious publications geared toward women. They revolved around the daily lives of Jewish women, offered guidance in matters of family life, child rearing, the obligations of the housewife, and basic orientation around Sabbath observance. The *tkhines*, however, did not offer explanations, or guidance in the understanding of the scriptural traditions and time-bound rituals of Judaism, which was the exclusive domain of the male community members. However, these supplications consolidated a sphere of female religious practice in a community strongly marked by observance. Women thus contributed to the community's cohesion, and their pious practices fostered a sense of purpose and responsibility. Their role in the traditional Jewish community was that of cultural facilitator. It seems noteworthy that female religious practice was conveyed through mentoring and tutoring, just as the religiously educated male elite of a given community received

[37] See, above all, Levitats, *Jewish Community in Russia*, 105–22.

[38] Edward Fram, *My Dear Daughter: Rabbi Benjamin Slonik and the Education of Jewish Women in Sixteenth-Century Poland* (Cincinnati, 2007), 37–84.

religious instruction and improved knowledge in the *bet ha-midrash*. More ritually knowledgeable women – known in the vernacular as *zogerke* or *firzogerin* (best translated as "instructor") – often guided their less-informed counterparts in prayers and other religious practices.[39] A distinguishing feature of publications for Jewish women in Poland–Lithuania – in contrast to western Ashkenaz – was the greater prominence of messianic messages.[40] Here, the most popular collection of supplications (*Shloyshe Sheorim*) was authored in the mid eighteenth century by Sarah bas Tovim. Her supplications drew on the crypto-Sabbatean *Hemdat Yamim* [Days of Delight] and carried a distinctly esoteric and messianic character.[41]

The prominence of messianic expectations among the Jews of Poland–Lithuania is commonly ascribed to the traumas of the Khmelnytsky uprising, which ended a long period of continuous growth and consolidation in the Jewish community, with thousands of Jews falling victim to this confrontation between the Commonwealth and a disenfranchised, non-Polish nobility in the provinces acquired after the Union of Lublin.[42] Although there is disagreement about the textual sources of these messianic expectations and the impact of esoteric literature, the Jews of Poland–Lithuania did indeed take a great interest in the news that a Jew in the Ottoman Empire, Sabbatai Zevi from Smyrna, had been proclaimed messiah.[43] The leading Jewish communities of Vilna, Kraków, and Lwów sent delegates to meet this alleged redeemer, who returned to Poland having received kabbalistic writings from the purported messiah.[44] Among these delegates were also some who, like Nehemia ha-Cohen from

[39] Ibid., 65.

[40] On gender as a central factor shaping religious community and practice, see Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodecky and the Maid of Ludomir Tradition," in Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Jewish History: Essays in Honor of Chimen Abramsky* (London, 1988), 495–525; Moshe Rosman, "The History of Jewish Women in Early Modern Poland: An Assessment," in Chaeran Freeze, Paula Hyman, and Antony Polonsky, eds., *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 18: *Jewish Women in Eastern Europe* (Portland, OR, 2005), 25–56; Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston, MA, 1998), 3–75.

[41] Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs*, 128.

[42] Gershom Scholem, "Le Mouvement sabbataiste en Pologne," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 143 (1953), 1, 30–90, esp. 40–3.

[43] Moshe Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan: The Diffusion of Lurianic Kabbala and Sabbateanism: A Re-Examination," *Jewish History* 7 (1993) 2, 79–104.

[44] Ibid., 90, argues that the diffusion of kabbalistic writings in Poland was not, as had been argued by Gershom Scholem, the prerequisite for the success of Sabbateanism in this region, but rather its consequence.

Lwów, critically assessed Sabbatai Zevi and came to the conclusion that he was not the messiah, informing the Turkish authorities about the outcome of this assessment.[45] This, in turn, led to Zevi's arrest and, later, the Turkish ultimatum to the false messiah either to convert to Islam or to face execution. News about the approaching redemption, however, had started circulating across Europe, including in Poland–Lithuania, where the messianic promise was met with particular enthusiasm. Prayers, penitence, and fasts celebrated the coming of the messiah across the region and prepared the way for messianic redemption. Particularly enthusiastic individuals left their homes to meet the redeemer, and, in several locations, public processions paraded the image of Sabbatai Zevi through the streets.[46]

After the great shock and disillusionment of Sabbatai's conversion to Islam, Jewish authorities attempted to extirpate allegiance to him and cover the traces of the short period of widespread messianic enthusiasm. Pages were torn out of minute books that had recorded celebratory prayers, and inscriptions in synagogues were painted over.[47] In two segments of Jewish society, however, the appeal of Sabbatai Zevi did persist: among a considerable number of Jews for whom the messianic message remained more appealing than its rebuttal through religious authorities; and among a number of kabbalistic thinkers for whom the Sabbatai's conversion to Islam formed part and parcel of a larger redemptive design.[48] It was from these two groups that the followers of clandestine, sectarian Sabbateanism were recruited in Poland–Lithuania, against whom the Council of Four Lands issued a ban as early as 1670.[49] Although the religious establishment successfully delegitimized the Sabbatean movement as heretical, the antinomian momentum of Sabbatai Zevi, as well as the opportunity to create alternative sources of religious authority (namely, the ability to partake in the revelation of the divine presence) endured in the form of a network of heresy. At the same time, Sabbateanism also served as a spiritual protest against the exclusive focus on talmudic study and observance. This opposition between activist sectarian messianism and passive rabbinic messianism would constitute the core of the enthusiast dynamic in the Hasidic movement, as well as in the Frankist heresy, both of which emerged in the mid eighteenth century.

[45] Scholem, "Mouvement," 55. [46] Ibid., 40–52.
[47] Ibid., 57; see also Michal F. Galas, "Sabbateanism," in *YEJEE*, II, 1648–50.
[48] Scholem, "Mouvement," 57; and a recent analysis of the role of Jewish women in sectarian Sabbateanism: Ada Rapaport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi, 1666–1816* (Oxford, 2011), 80–106.
[49] Scholem, "Mouvement," 58.

The most consequential pursuit of spiritual fulfillment at the expense of the traditional austere study of the Talmud would be proposed by Yisrael ben Eliezer, the Ba'al Shem Tov (*c.* 1700–60), founder of Hasidism.[50] This movement proposed a new Jewish spiritual community which would follow a leader, or *tzaddik*, able to work miracles and partake of the Divine, while at the same time not questioning the core tenets of the Halakhah, but, on the contrary, insisting on an even greater commitment to Jewish observance than traditional rabbinical Judaism. Hasidism never constituted a homogeneous, centralized movement. Rather, it was the expression of a broad trend to reclaim ownership in a spiritual Jewish community of tradition and ritual, formulated against an inflexible civic and religious hierarchy. It coalesced around leaders in a growing number of communities of highly diverse character, outlook, and theology. Declared a heretical movement and excommunicated by the Gaon of Vilna, the leading talmudic authority of his time, in 1772, Hasidic communities were able to assert their legitimacy, due to popular and elite support, but also through skillful negotiations with Russian and Polish authorities.[51] The emergence of this enthusiastic movement reflects deepening religious commitment combined with, at times, diluted halakhic expertise. Its adherents sought spiritual fulfillment in an accessible community of like-minded followers, transcending the hierarchies and strictures of the local oligarchic community. As Moshe Rosman has persuasively argued, despite its claims to restore religious tradition, the Hasidic movement proved to be "inherently modern" by shifting the emphasis from the austere study of the Talmud and the observance of the daily ritual to individual adherence to a charismatic leader.[52]

[50] Scholarly literature about the history of Hasidism abounds – for a survey of recent trends, see the introduction to the 2nd edn. of Murray Jay Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Oxford, 2013); for a short discussion of the main characteristics, see Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania*, 160–210; and David Assaf, "Hasidism: Historical Overview," in *YEJEE*, I, 659–70; for the period of expansion around 1800, see Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society* (Oxford, 2006), 25–88; for two recent analyses of individual Hasidic communities, see David Assaf, *The Regal Way: The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin* (Stanford, 2002); and Shaul Magid, *Hasidism on the Margin: Reconciliation, Antinomianism, and Messianism in Izbica/Radzin Hasidism* (Madison, 2003).

[51] The process of both gaining footholds in Jewish communities and gaining recognition from non-Jewish authorities on the threshold of the nineteenth century is discussed by Dynner, *Men of Silk,* and Marcin Wodziński*, Hasidism and Politics: The Kingdom of Poland 1815–1864* (Oxford, 2013).

[52] Moshe Rosman, "Hasidism as a Modern Phenomenon – The Paradox of Modernization Without Secularization," *Simon-Dubnow-Institut Yearbook* 5 (2007), 215–26.

The Sabbatean legacy played out entirely differently in the trajectory of the heretical movement led by Jacob Frank. Frank's parents had left Poland–Lithuania during the anti-Sabbatean purge. Frank grew up in the Ottoman Empire, where he was initiated to the sect. He moved to Poland–Lithuania in 1755 and established himself as a leader among dispersed Sabbateans. Jewish and Polish authorities became aware of this renewed sectarian mobilization because of a highly publicized mystic–erotic ritual in Lanckorona in January 1756. Initially considered to be a Jewish sect rejecting the Talmud, the so-called Contra-Talmudists were excommunicated by the Jewish leadership, a decision backed by the Council of Four Lands in September 1756. As was the case in the intra-communal confrontation in Vilna discussed above, the involvement of non-Jewish parties, in this case Bishop Mikołaj Dembowski of Kamieniec Podolski, led to the indictment of Frank's opponents, i.e. the Jewish establishment, and the burning of the Talmud in the summer of 1757. After the death of Dembowski, Bishop Kajetan Sołtyk of Żytomierz, who was previously engaged in anti-Jewish persecutions surrounding various accusations of ritual murder, exploited the emergence of the Contra-Talmudists to fabricate a pseudo-Jewish pamphlet and ascribe its authorship to members of the Frankist movement. He also convinced the Saxonian Elector and Polish King August III to grant official toleration of the sect, which again subsequently challenged the Jewish leadership to a disputation, this time in Lwów. This disputation, based on, among other things, a declaration by the Contra-Talmudists that Jews require Christian blood for ritual purposes, took place September 17–19, 1759. Due in large part to the intensified intercessory efforts by the Council of Four Lands, these accusations were taken up neither by the Church hierarchy nor by the secular authorities. The outcome was rather an identification of the followers of Frank as would-be Christians who were to be prodded into conversion. Consequently, during and shortly after the Lwów disputation, around 3,000 followers of Frank agreed to become Roman Catholics.

A community with shared Jewish roots and of Christian faith emerged from this unique case of mass conversion. It developed lasting sectarian bonds, with a strong presence above all in Warsaw and Prague, and its members became known as 'Frankists." Frank himself converted a second time in Warsaw in 1760, though suspicions were voiced about his and his followers' sincerity. Frank was separated from his followers and sequestrated for thirteen years in Częstochowa, until his release due to Russian intervention in 1772. Frank moved first to Moravia, where he enjoyed support from a wealthy family in Brno. He became a frequent visitor to the court in Vienna until he left the Habsburg Empire in 1786 to settle in Offenbach near Frankfurt, where he died in 1791. Throughout these years,

Frank would maintain claims to his own messianic leadership, though even while sequestrated in Częstochowa he also promoted the worship of his daughter Ewa as the incarnation of the divine presence (*shekhina*) and the true messiah, a suggestion which probably lost much of its appeal with her death in September, 1816.[53]

By the late eighteenth century, we perceive efforts to reassert rabbinical authority and learning, leading to the emergence of a new type of *yeshiva*, particularly in those Lithuanian provinces under the immediate authority of the Vilna community. The successor to the Gaon of Vilna as the leading talmudic authority in Lithuania, Chaim ben Isaak of Volozhin (1749–1821), sought to intensify the study of the Talmud and other halakhic texts, while at the same time avoiding the extreme form of dialectic textual interpretation known as *pilpul*.[54] Chaim ben Isaak founded the first *yeshiva* of this new type in Volozhin in 1802, introducing, among other practices, the *mishmarot*, three consecutive daily shifts of Torah study, reflecting his hope to invigorate traditional rabbinical Judaism through such intensified practice. Lithuania would remain throughout the nineteenth century the heartland of traditional rabbinical Judaism, now often referred to by the label "opposers" (*mitnagdim*) of Hasidism. It seems that this attempt to re-invent talmudic learning had only limited success – it indeed re-invigorated the traditional study of rabbinic works in historically Lithuanian territories, and significantly contributed to a separate Lithuanian-Jewish identity. It did not, however, stem the tide of the more enthusiast approach to religious community offered by Hasidism.

The persistent search for fresh approaches to address the spiritual and philosophical needs of eastern European Jews led in the early nineteenth century to the so-called *musar* movement, that linked ethics and the Jewish religious tradition. Its most prominent leader, Israel Salanter (1810–83), posited that despite religious observance, principles of ethical behavior were not sufficiently rooted among Jews.[55]

More importantly, however, a new culture of knowledge emerged among the Jews of Poland–Lithuania, combining the acquisition of general knowledge with the maintenance of principles of observant Judaism. This new attitude was allegedly already sanctioned by the Gaon of Vilna. Barukh Schick of Shklov (1744–1808), cites him in the introduction to his translation of Euclid's *Elements*, published in 1780, with the following words:

[53] Maciejko, *Mixed Multitude*, 179.

[54] Shaul Stampfer, *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century: Creating a Tradition of Learning* (Oxford, 2012), 15–47.

[55] Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth* (Philadelphia, 1993), 117–34.

I heard from his holy tongue that for every deficiency of knowledge a man has in the sciences (*ḥokhmah*), he will have ten deficiencies of knowledge in the science of the Torah; for Torah and science are closely related. And he commanded me to translate everything possible of the sciences into our holy tongue . . . in order to spread knowledge among our people Israel.[56]

This new culture of knowledge might be best described as an Enlightenment without philosophy: representatives of the Jewish Enlightenment in eastern Europe had to abstain from challenges to the hegemonic role of religion in order to find an audience. Authors like the above-mentioned Barukh Schick of Shklov would embrace scientific investigation and seek to reconcile it with talmudic learning. The eastern European enlighteners rejected, however, the esoteric traditions of the Kabbalah and considered Hasidism as the embodiment of what would be called obscurantism in the nineteenth century. *Maskilim* like Mendel Lefin (1749–1826) or Abraham Stern (*c.* 1769–1842) combined research in the sciences and engineering with a strong involvement in politics – in the case of Stern, membership in a government committee on Jewish Affairs (after 1825). Others, who did not wish to trade in philosophy in order to advance the diffusion of general knowledge, moved to western Europe and became public intellectuals and authors of considerable impact. These included Zalkind Hurwitz (1751–1812) from the Lublin region, who became an employee of the Bibliothèque Royale in Paris and the author of the successful entry to a competition of the Academy of Sciences of Metz with his *Apologie des juifs* on the question of how to make Jews happy and successful subjects; Salomon Maimon (1754–1800) from Lithuania, a highly respected philosopher and critic of Immanuel Kant; and also Hyman Hurwitz (1770–1844), the first professor of Hebrew at University College London.[57]

JEWS AND NON-JEWS IN POLAND–LITHUANIA

Relations between Jews and non-Jews evolved only slowly in the period between the mid seventeenth and the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The Jewish community maintained a considerable

[56] Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews*, 22.

[57] Raphael Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry, 1780–1815* (London 1971), 536–601; Frances Malino, *A Jew in the French Revolution: The Life of Zalkind Hurwitz* (Oxford, 1996); David Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton, 2000), 261–8; Abraham Socher, *The Radical Enlightenment of Solomon Maimon* (Stanford, 2006); Nancy Sinkoff, *Out of the Shtetl: Making Jews Modern in the Polish Borderlands* (Providence, 2004).

distance from surrounding non-Jewish communities, epitomized in the persistence of Yiddish as the language of Jewish everyday life. Conversions to Christianity remained rare occurrences, with the notable exception of the mass conversion of Frankists in 1759 discussed above. Conversions from Christianity to Judaism were punishable by death in the period under consideration.[58] This cultural separateness persisted despite the continuous economic involvement of Jews with non-Jews, and the ever-growing presence of Jewish communities in small towns and urban centers, with, in many cases, considerable spatial proximity.

Four areas of immediate social interaction between Jews and non-Jews seem the most prominent: (1) economic cooperation between nobility and clergy on the one side and Jewish leaseholders, creditors, and debtors on the other; (2) the market place with Jewish traders and non-Jewish patrons, as well as Jewish peddling; (3) the individual Jewish household employing non-Jewish mostly female servants; and (4) the local inn with the Jewish inn-keeper and non-Jewish patrons. In the period under consideration, changes occurred in all four areas, impacting on relations between Jews and non-Jews.

The economic alliance between the Polish–Lithuanian nobility and the Jews expanded and deepened from the beginning of Jewish settlement in the region until the Khmelnytsky uprising of 1648. Yet even after the uprising it remained a very prominent feature in the economic cooperation between Jews and non-Jews until the first partitions of the Commonwealth, even though it almost never entailed socializing beyond business matters.[59] The alliance between nobility and Jews was undermined from the early nineteenth century onwards: although it has been demonstrated that the noble–Jewish alliance survived the partitions, its significance diminished considerably after then.[60] In the context of a growing appetite for state intervention in economic policies, treasuries sought to extend their control of the surplus to be gained both from managing large estates and from the *propinacja*, as the production and

[58] Magda Teter, *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era* (Cambridge, 2006), 64–5, gives two examples of women accused of conversion to Judaism and sentenced to death, based on the pertinent provisions of Magdeburg Law.

[59] For a detailed discussion of the shifts in the economic alliance between nobility and the Jews in the eighteenth century, see the case study of the Jews on the Radziwiłł estates by Adam Teller: *Money, Power, and Influence in Eighteenth-Century Lithuania: The Jews on the Radziwiłł Estates* (Stanford, 2016).

[60] For the persistent attempts to keep Jewish expertise in the production and sale of alcoholic beverages, see, however, Glenn Dynner, "Legal Fictions: The Survival of Rural Jewish Tavernkeeping in the Kingdom of Poland," *Jewish Social Studies* (n.s.) 16 (2010), 2, 28–66.

distribution of alcohol was called in Poland–Lithuania.[61] Another field of economic cooperation between Jewish and non-Jewish elites, namely large-scale moneylending, underwent a substantial shift, with individual Jews – but, more prominently, Jewish communities – emerging in the seventeenth century as debtors to the aristocracy and to a range of Christian institutions and individuals. A central motive seems to have been a financial one, as Jews took advantage of the low interest rates for funds borrowed from Christian religious institutions. These funds were reinvested in more profitable ventures. However, this form of borrowing money also constituted a subtle way to secure consideration from parties not always inclined to respect non-Christians. Jewish communal debts would be a factor in securing the continuation of a certain amount of Jewish communal autonomy in the nineteenth century in the Prussian, Austrian, and Russian partitions.[62]

The second relevant area of Jewish/non-Jewish interaction, market places and trade fairs, offered many occasions for intercultural encounters. Jewish tradespeople sold a variety of manufactured goods to the Christian rural population. The latter brought cattle and a variety of goods from farms and villages in order to sell them, or exchanged them for goods not available in the countryside or in villages. These exchanges took place on a routine basis and required a minimal ability to communicate. Despite playing a major role in establishing contacts between Jews and non-Jews and requiring at least a modest degree of trust, the exclusive focus on exchange limited in most cases the establishment of more complex relationships. This remarkable tension between intimacy and distance is reflected in the description of a market day in the eastern Polish town of Janówka by the Polish writer Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812–87):

[During the market day in Janówka], the Jews sit in their small shops and, unimpressed by the crowds and the general mayhem, they invite everybody, they lure, implore, argue, negotiate, sometimes they even fight with each other. Women hesitate between the eloquent Jews and the quiet Russian merchant. The Jew has his means to attract the client, he has been taught about the human heart, as about the Talmud, by his father; he knows the broad avenues into it as well as

[61] Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 106–43; Hundert, *Jews in a Polish Private Town*, 64–8; for the period of the partitions and developments in the early nineteenth century, see Jürgen Hensel, "Polnische Adelsnation und jüdische Vermittler 1815–1830. Über den vergeblichen Versuch einer Judenemanzipation in einer nicht emanzipierten Gesellschaft," *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte* 23 (1983), 7–227, and, most recently, Glenn Dynner, *Yankel's Tavern: Jews, Liquor, and Life in the Kingdom of Poland* (Oxford, 2014), especially 82–102.

[62] Robert Liberles, "Emancipation and the Structure of the Jewish Community in the 19th Century," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 31 (1986), 51–67.

the crooked paths. [After the market] the Jews hurriedly wrap up the remainder of their goods, night is falling . . . Everybody is drunk, except for the Jews.[63]

The third area of intercultural interaction, relevant to the more affluent Jewish households, entailed the frequent employment of Christian women as servants and as wet nurses. Their employment often seemed necessary due to the prominent role of Jewish women in the family business, frequently involving absences from the family home. The presence of Christian women in Jewish households created much discomfort among the gatekeepers of religious and cultural self-assertion, as the close social and spatial proximity often did in fact contribute to a much closer relationship between individual Jews and non-Jews. From the point of view of the Jewish religious authorities, this presence of young female Christians was problematic in several respects. They made it more likely that not all dietary provisions of Jewish law would be respected, with the servants frequently being engaged in the preparation of meals. Employing wet nurses seemed undesirable from the same point of view. The presence of female servants frequently led to intimate sexual relations and to children born out of wedlock. Considering the continuous occurrence of ritual murder accusations, this form of unseemly proximity had the potential to endanger the well-being of the Jewish community as a whole. In rare cases, sexual or romantic relationships evolved into committed ones, including the informal adoption of one partner's religious practice, an occurrence that put both individuals in mortal danger.[64]

In the course of the long period of Jewish prominence in the production and sale of alcohol, the Jewish tavern keeper, a fixture of rural and small-town social contexts in Poland–Lithuania, became a symbol of the central role played by Jews in the rural economy.[65] In combination with the production of spirits or the brewing of beer or mead, keeping a tavern or an inn constituted the livelihood of a majority of Jews living outside an urban environment until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Toward the end of the period under consideration, there were efforts by members of the nobility, as well as government policies, to drive Jews out of the *propinacja*, since the number of Jews still active in this trade remained considerable. In the tavern, the populace would socialize, exchange goods and information, with the innkeeper also functioning

[63] Cited after François Guesnet, *Der Fremde als Nachbar. Polnische Positionen zur jüdischen Präsenz. Texte seit 1800* (Frankfurt am Main, 2009), 76–7.

[64] Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 65–6.

[65] Yankel, a Jewish tavern keeper, is one of the main – positive – characters in the most iconic of Polish patriotic literary creations, *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz (1st edn. 1834); see Dynner, *Yankel's Tavern*, 14–46.

as small-scale moneylender. As a social space, it competed with the church, much to the regret of the clergy.[66]

All of the above-mentioned forms of social interaction between Jews and non-Jews, as well as the complexities of multi-religious urban and rural settlement, led, in Magda Teter's felicitous formula, to a "tension between intimacy and vulnerability." As business partners or tenants of the aristocracy, Jews lived in buildings within the boundaries of towns formally excluding Jews from settling. Jews and non-Jews celebrated holidays, sometimes involving highly visible rituals, on the same streets. In most Polish–Lithuanian towns, Jews lived in informally established neighborhoods, or enclaves. However, these neighborhoods were as clearly identifiable as zones of overlap, often leading to Jews and non-Jews sharing buildings: "Both Jewish and Christian sources from the early modern period suggest a constant tension between a desire for stricter enforcement of laws (isolating the respective communities) and a need for compromise when these rules clashed with common practice and social needs."[67] These practices and needs were dictated not least by the complexities of multi-ethnic and multi-religious cohabitation, which was a major distinctive feature of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the period under consideration, religious authorities of all communities harnessed their own rules of conduct to maintain social distance, formally and informally discouraging the establishment of closer social relationships. Also, non-aristocratic urban elites, which contributed significantly to the establishment of a semipermeable "semineutral society" (Jacob Katz) in central and western Europe, played a much less significant role in Poland–Lithuania, with considerably fewer spaces and places for sustained and meaningful encounters across religious boundaries.[68]

In western Europe, Christian scholars became important multipliers of knowledge about non-Christian religions, including Judaism. The clergy of Poland–Lithuania, however, proved to be much more reluctant to engage with the Jewish religious heritage, and contributed significantly to keeping anti-Jewish religious prejudice alive, especially with regard to persistent charges of ritual murder and host

[66] Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 63–9.

[67] For an amply documented case study, see David Frick, "Jews in Public Places: Further Chapters in the Jewish–Christian Encounter in Seventeenth-Century Vilna," and Magda Teter, "Social Life and Jewish and Canon Law," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, 22, 215–48 and 249–70, esp. 253, respectively.

[68] Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), 42–56.

desecration.[69] Magda Teter has argued that the Counter-Reformation helped to keep Poland from critically re-evaluating such accusations, including allegations of the desecration of hosts and ritual murder,[70] which are documented for Poland–Lithuania as starting in the sixteenth century. A particularly gruesome trial based on ritual murder charges was held in Lublin in 1636 and drew international attention, with the defendants suffering torture and cruel death.[71] Until the turn of the eighteenth century, Jewish communities, their aristocratic patrons, or representatives of the royal court often managed to intervene successfully in cases of ritual murder accusations. However, with a growing dissemination of such allegations in the eighteenth century, the myth of Jewish ritual murder proved resilient in Poland even into modern times. In the case of a trial in Sandomierz in 1710–13, the instigator and organizer of the criminal investigation was Stefan Żuchowski (1666–1716), a parish priest, archdeacon, and inquisitor of the town. His two pamphlets on the alleged ritual use of Christian blood were widely circulated and republished well into the twentieth century.[72]

THE JEWS OF POLAND–LITHUANIA TOWARD THE END OF THE COMMONWEALTH

The eighteenth century appears to be a period of accelerated transformation within the Jewish community of Poland–Lithuania. Internal as well as external factors drove these changes, and were dependent on each other. Although the devastations of the Khmelnytsky uprising ended the process

[69] Guldon and Wijaczka, "The Accusation of Ritual Murder," 99–140; Hanna Węgrzynek, *"Czarna legenda" Żydów. Procesy o rzekome mordy rytualne w dawnej Polsce* (Warsaw, 1995).

[70] Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 99.

[71] Majer Bałaban, "Hugo Grotius und die Ritualmordprozesse in Lublin, 1636," in Ismar Elbogen, Josef Meisl, and Mark Wischnitzer, eds., *Festschrift zu Simon Dubnows siebzigstem Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1930), 87–112.

[72] Guldon and Wijaczka, "The Accusation of Ritual Murder," 126–8. See also Hillel Kieval, "Blood Libels and Host Desecration Accusations," in *YEJEE*, I, 195–200; Elissa Bemporad, "Empowerment, Defiance, and Demise: Jews and the Blood Libel Specter under Stalinism," *Jewish History* 26 (2012), 3–4, 343–61; Marcin Wodziński, "Blood and the Hasidim: On the History of Ritual Murder Accusations in Nineteenth-Century Poland," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, 22, 273–90; Marcin Zaremba, "The Myth of Ritual Murder in Post-War Poland: Pathology and Hypotheses," in Michal Galas and Antony Polonsky, eds., *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 23: *Jews in Kraków* (Oxford, 2011), 465–506; Jolanta Żyndul, *Kłamstwo krwi. Legenda mordu rytualnego na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku* (Warsaw, 2011).

of religious, constitutional, and legal consolidation and a long period of continuous expansion in the number of Jewish communities, the overall Jewish population in the territories of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth continued to grow, reaching around three quarters of a million at the turn to the nineteenth century. The loss of political power of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth from the mid seventeenth century, leading to the partitions, contributed to a more dynamic religious and cultural exchange between the Jews of the Commonwealth and those in the Ottoman Empire, a crucial factor in the cross-fertilization of these communities and an important factor in spreading the Sabbatean movement.

Its success contributed to the growing influence of esoteric interpretations of the Jewish textual tradition, a crucial factor in the emergence of Hasidism and the most significant challenge to traditional rabbinical and communal authority. The very strength of Jewish communal autonomy became its greatest threat, as the administrative and legal prerogatives of the local civil and religious leadership stifled social mobility. The growing frustration among the second tier of communal elites first found expression in the number of Jews turning to non-Jewish adjudication and in open challenges to the communal leadership. Eventually, the Hasidic movement helped to satisfy hopes for a new leadership. It found its most ardent supporters among the young and the emerging new mercantile elites. For these segments of Jewish society, the ability to decide about their individual religious and spiritual allegiance independently from an existing local, communal context proved compelling. This challenge, however, also inaugurated a renewed effort to redefine Torah study and Jewish ethics in rabbinical Judaism, allowing for a consolidation of traditional observance, especially in Lithuanian territories.

Challenges to the autonomous status of the Jewish community and its leadership were formulated both by non-Jewish statesmen and by enlightened Jews, on the basis of western European debates and reforms concerning the status of the Jews, most notably spurred by Joseph II of Austria and by the Emancipation of the Jews in revolutionary France. The comparatively modest impact of these Enlightened proposals for internal reform needs to be credited not least to the dispute between rabbinical authorities and the emerging Hasidic movement. Whereas, in central and western Europe, the challenge to traditional religious leadership revolved around issues of reform, the Jews in Polish–Lithuanian territories were debating how to practice observance and to define religious authority and leadership.

State and administrative reforms similarly contributed to the transformation of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry in the second half of the eighteenth century. As noted, the 1764 abolition of the Council of Four Lands

undertaken in the context of a reform of tax collection was part of this larger reform process, and was perceived negatively by the traditional communal leadership. The reform debate in the Polish and Lithuanian public sphere also triggered an upsurge in reasoned challenges to this traditional leadership, inspired not least by reforms demanded by Jewish Enlighteners farther to the west, as well as by the first steps toward integrative Jewish legislation, most notably by Joseph II of Austria, beginning in 1781.

In this context, the partitions do not mark a significant departure from this new focus on cultural and administrative integration of the Jewish population. With the notable exception of the Prussian partition, the measures targeting the former Polish–Lithuanian Jewish population coming under new rule in 1772, 1793, and 1795 were conducted with more enthusiasm than success. In Prussia, however, the transformation of formerly Polish Jews into Prussian citizens was irreversible just one generation after the third partition.[73] The gradual dismantling of Jewish autonomy constituted a core element in these policies. Thus, the Toleration Edict granted in Austria by Joseph II in 1782 was introduced to the Austrian partition in 1789, reducing Jewish self-government to tasks of charity and taxation. It was extended to the Free City of Kraków in 1817. The General Ordinance Concerning Jews enacted in the Prussian partition in 1797 followed the same principle. Similar policies followed in the Kingdom of Poland and in the Russian Empire, where the former *kahal* was formally abolished in 1822 and 1844, respectively.[74]

Thus, in the last decades of existence of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the pace of religious, political, societal, economic, and cultural changes for this largest European Jewish community accelerated significantly. A shared vernacular, the considerable cultural distance to non-Jewish society, as well as a long and proud tradition of communal autonomy contributed to a considerable cohesion in this community. Religious diversification, growing dissatisfaction with oligarchic rule, and the continuous efforts by the state toward an administrative and cultural integration of the Jewish population, however, constituted strong centrifugal forces. Over the period under

[73] For a detailed synthesis, see, most recently, Polonsky, *Jews in Poland and Russia*, I, 183–440, but also Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry*, 299–429.

[74] Anna Jakimyszyn, *Żydzi krakowscy w dobie Rzeczypospolitej Krakowskiej. Status prawny, przeobrażenia gminy, system edukacyjny* (Kraków, 2008), 21–34, 109–84; John D. Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the "Jewish Question" in Russia, 1772–1825* (DeKalb, IL, 1986), 53–143.

consideration in this chapter, the trajectory of the Jews of Poland–Lithuania would lead from a constitutionally secure, estate-like community to a religiously diverse, socially divided ethnic minority, which in the nineteenth century would come under growing pressure to assert itself as a nation in a multi-ethnic setting. Although this process would be at least partially successful, the price for this self-assertion would be an increased isolation.[75]

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[75] Eli Lederhendler, "Classless: On the Social Status of Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50 (2008), 509–34.

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CHAPTER 31

JEWS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (1580–1839)

JOSEPH R. HACKER

Although many historians employ the term "early modern" to mark the changes experienced by Jews living in Christian Europe from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, scholars of both eastern European and Ottoman Jewry generally agree that these same transformations were largely absent from these regions. Certainly, as regards Jews in the Ottoman Empire, their legal status, relationship to the government and to the surrounding society, their economic activities, cultural outlook, and lifestyle did not undergo a radical alteration during this period, even though they experienced definite change and development. These centuries should therefore not be understood as marking an "early modern" period for the Jews of the Ottoman Empire, comparable to that which may have occurred elsewhere. Instead, equivalently fundamental changes in the world of Ottoman Jews occurred only in the nineteenth century.

It is widely accepted today that the decade of the 1580s marks the beginning of a period of transition in Ottoman history. The years 1453 to the end of the sixteenth century are often described as the classical period, one characterized by military conquests and territorial expansion, by centralized and autocratic government, by urbanization and economic expansion as well as cultural flowering (particularly in architecture and material culture). Not so the era that followed. From 1580 on, a series of severe financial crises hobbled the Empire due to the flooding of Mediterranean markets with American silver and as a result of the need to upgrade the Ottoman military. Political instability (repeated large-scale rebellions in the center and Anatolian provinces) resulted in demographic crisis and exacerbated tensions and conflict between the core and periphery. From the first quarter of the seventeenth century, localism intensified. Power and authority increasingly passed into the hands of local communal, ethnic, and religious entities, strengthening the interdependence of their members. Externally, the rise of England, Holland,

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and France as the hegemonic powers in international commerce, and their dominance of Mediterranean shipping, contributed to the economic, political, and military weakening of the Ottoman Empire. The Empire's involvement in various wars against the Habsburgs, and later against Russia, also contributed to territorial contraction and financial crisis. Scholars point to the system of signed agreements or capitulations, through which the Empire granted to resident citizens of western powers and other foreign entities certain legal rights and commercial benefits, as an indication of the ascendancy of the western powers and the concomitant enervation of the Ottomans. These capitulations operated in the imperial territories, in the administrative centers and port cities, among the commercial "nations," as well as in other frameworks.

Still, while it has traditionally been accepted that the seventeenth century was a period of crisis and decline in all aspects of life in the Empire, it is also now recognized as a period of transition in which important positive developments occurred as well. At the same time, the stagnation in the domains of government and administration, economy and society, as well as military retreat, only really crystallized starting at the end of the seventeenth century. In this period, local and particularistic elements solidified, while the effectiveness of centralized administration atrophied – and this despite the manifold efforts at reform and the conscious emulation of European social and economic models. Additionally, the Empire experienced a number of military defeats and was forced to surrender territories it had controlled. Prominently, the Empire suffered a major blow in the wake of the second siege of Vienna (1683). The Habsburg-created Holy League (including Venice, the Papal State, Poland, and later Russia) subsequently wrested Buda and central Hungary, Belgrade, and Podolia from the Ottomans.[1] Additional damaging wars with the Habsburgs and Russia were conducted during the eighteenth century, although it was only after the defeat at Russian hands in the Russo-Turkish War (1768–74) and the peace treaty of Küçuk Kaynarca that the Empire was seriously weakened both militarily and economically.

This enfeeblement became all too obvious during Napoleon's campaign against Egypt (1799–1802), which itself made possible the rise of Muhammad Ali Pasha as the semi-autonomous Egyptian ruler (in 1805) who governed there for decades. The national awakening of the Balkan

[1] Rifa'at'Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany, 1991); Ḥalil Inalcik and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. II: *1600–1914* (Cambridge, 1994); Suraya Faroqhi, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey,* vol. III: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839* (Cambridge, 2006); Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923* (New York, 2007).

peoples during the first third of the nineteenth century led to the further territorial depletion of Ottoman lands and accelerated the Empire's political, military, and economic decline. Following these developments, Sultan Mahmud II initiated a program of far-reaching reforms. In 1826, he dissolved the Janissary military and, thirteen years later, several months after his death and in the wake of measures instituted during his reign (including the elimination in 1829 of discriminatory dress codes for non-Muslims), the era of the Tanzimat Reforms began, marking a new phase in the Empire's history.

In the *Hatt-i Şerif Gülhane* decree issued on the November 3, 1839, there emerged, among other things, the aspiration and intention of eliminating legal inequality between Muslim and non-Muslim residents in all areas of life. In return for taking on the obligations of all subjects, including recruitment into the military, they would be guaranteed equal rights. In 1835, Rabbi Avraham Halevi was chosen as Hakham Bashi, the first to serve before the government as chief representative of the Empire's entire Jewish community. And on February 18, 1856, an additional decree, *Hatt-i Hümayûn*, was promulgated, which reinforced the previous one, including the promise of equality before the law of all subjects, thus effectively eliminating the position of the *dhimmi* and the poll tax associated with it, while opening the door to non-Muslim integration into the education system and governmental administration. There thus occurred a series of fundamental and essential changes in the status of imperial Jews and in their relationship with Ottoman society and administration, which, from the middle decades of the nineteenth century, ushered in a new era in the history of Ottoman Jewry.[2]

SOCIAL COMPONENTS, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MIGRATION, MAP OF JEWISH SETTLEMENT

By the turn of the seventeenth century, the Jewish population of the Ottoman Empire was comprised of numerous variegated elements. The Empire's territorial expansion during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, combined with the expulsion of Jews from Christian lands, produced an agglomeration of Jews speaking different languages and maintaining distinct Jewish traditions and cultures.

The Empire extended from Baghdad and Yemen in the east to Poland and Hungary in the west, and from Crimea, Azov, and Podolia in the north to the Mediterranean coast of Africa in the south. In the eastern lands, in North Africa and Anatolia, the great majority of the population was

[2] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford, 1961), chs. 1–4; Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World* (Cambridge, 2001), 130–41.

Muslim, while Syria and Lebanon, Coptic Egypt, Istanbul, and Izmir included sizable Christian minorities. On the other hand, in the Balkan lands and eastern Europe, Muslims constituted only a minority in a sea of Greek Orthodox (excluding Albania and Crimea and a number of urban centers and strategic points in the Balkan territories and European Turkey where, as a result of governmental policies, a great many Muslims resided). This situation brought Jews of the Empire together with a variety of populations, reflecting different cultures, customs, outlooks, and interests.

This circumstance proved a decisive influence as well in regard to the languages spoken by Jews. Those of the eastern lands and North Africa resided among an Arabic-speaking population and culture. Turkish was essentially confined to a relatively narrow stratum of cultural and economic elites in government, the military, and commerce, and was the language of official government administration. In Anatolia (including Istanbul, despite the fact that many Christians resided there, including Armenians), Turkish was the language of ordinary people and the governing elites, while in European portions of the Empire the bulk of the population spoke various vernacular tongues (Greek, Venetian, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, among others) while Turkish served as a spoken language for Muslims and as the official language of local government.

The Jews were compelled to adapt to this rich diversity of cultural conditions and circumstances and wide array of languages both in terms of their contacts and connections with their immediate surroundings and in terms of their links with the local and central governments. Only in this way could they earn their livelihoods and manage their affairs. Moreover, the Jews themselves preserved and maintained the languages and cultures of their lands of origin. Among the Iberian immigrants of the sixteenth century who comprised the majority of the Empire's Jewish population, Judeo-Spanish served broadly as the spoken language and language of instruction, even after one or two generations.[3] At the same time, the (Greek) Romaniot Jews did not abandon Greek and the Musta'arib (Judeo-Arab) and Maghrebi (North African) Jews continued to be Arabic speakers, educating their sons in Judeo-Arabic. Consequently, Jews who were involved in commerce and trade, as well as Jews engaging in regular contact with local

[3] David M. Bunis, *Judezmo: An Introduction to the Language of the Sephardic Jews of the Ottoman Empire* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1999); Bunis, "Distinctive Characteristics of Jewish Ibero-Romance, circa 1492," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 4 (2004), 105–37; Ora Rodrigue-Schwarzwald, "Judeo-Spanish Studies," in Martin Goodman, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (Oxford, 2002), 572–600; Ora Schwartzwald, "Language Choice and Language Varieties Before and After the Expulsion," in Norman Stillman and Yedida K. Stillman, eds., *From Iberia to Diaspora: Studies in Sephardic History and Culture* (Leiden, 1999), 399–415.

and central governments, had to know Turkish from an administrative standpoint alongside Arabic or European languages, all according to their region and place of residence. All continued to use Hebrew as the language of their religious services and to communicate between themselves.

From the mid sixteenth century on, groups of European Catholics and Protestants who settled in the major cities and ports of the Empire as communities of merchants and businessmen were added to this mosaic of people and languages. These populations made use of Greek Christians, Armenians, and frequently Jews as middlemen, agents, factors, and translators. From the end of the seventeenth century, new autonomous communities comprised of Jews from Spanish and Portuguese origins emerged on the outskirts of the Empire, for example in Halab (Aleppo), Syria, as well as in Tunis, alongside local Jewish communities. The former were tied to the "mother" Spanish and Portuguese Jewish communities in the European regions (particularly Livorno) and engaged in both local and international trade. They were given the name "Francos" and benefited by and large from the protections afforded by the European powers.[4]

The large-scale Jewish emigration during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the expanding territories of the Ottoman Empire brought dramatic changes in the size and character of the Jewish population. This Jewish immigration to the Empire slowed considerably by the second half of the sixteenth century, but it did not altogether cease. Additional small numbers of Jews continued to migrate there, particularly those stemming from Spain and Portugal. As a result, a number of communities of former *conversos* (from Castile and Portugal) arose in Salonika (during the second half of the sixteenth century) and in Izmir (in the seventeenth century). Other immigrants established autonomous communities of Francos (Aleppo and Tunis) from the seventeenth century on. However, the core demographic transformations taking place in the Empire resulted from internal migrations rather than immigration from outside. Until the end of the sixteenth century, the largest communities, those strongest economically and socially, and those most influential within the Empire were Istanbul, Salonika, and to a lesser extent Adrianople in the west, and Cairo, Damascus, and Safed in the east.

[4] On the western Sephardim in the Levant, and on the "Francos" in the Ottoman Empire, see Simon Schwartzfuchs, "The Salonica 'Scale' – the Struggle Between the French and the Jewish Merchants" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 15 (1971–81), 77–102; Schwartzfuchs, "La 'Nazione Ebrea' Livournaise au Levant," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 50 (1984), 707–24; Minna Rozen, "France and the Jews of Egypt: An Anatomy of Relations, 1683–1801," in Jacob M. Landau, ed., *The Jews of Ottoman Egypt (1517–1914)* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1988), 421–70; Francesca Trivellato, "The Port Jews of Livorno and their Global Networks of Trade in the Early Modern Period," in David Cesarani and Gemma Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1900* (London, 2006), 31–48.

The seventeenth century was marked by the rise of Izmir, and the flowering of Aleppo. The Safed community collapsed entirely in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, never to recapture its former glory. Its residents resettled in Jerusalem, Cairo, Istanbul, Salonika, and some emigrated outside the Empire, especially to Italy and North Africa. During the second half of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth, the Jewish community of Jerusalem was rebuilt and transformed into an influential center of religious scholarship. Aleppo prospered during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries following its transformation into an international commercial hub that even came to eclipse Damascus. In the western part of the Empire, the most important change was the precipitous weakening of the community of Salonika along with the rise of Izmir, which became an outstanding Jewish entrepôt, comparable to Cairo and Istanbul.

Meanwhile, following a series of economic, demographic, and religious crises, Salonika, a community that during the sixteenth century had challenged the dominance of Istanbul, was now overshadowed by both Istanbul and Izmir as an economic hub, although it still retained its cultural influence. A significant portion of Salonikan Jewry migrated to Instanbul and Izmir at the start of the seventeenth century. The fires and plagues of the 1620s, as well as religious conversions following the apostasy of Sabbatai Zevi during the 1670s, had enervated the community profoundly. The city's Jewish population declined by half from the middle of the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century. In contrast, Izmir – which had lacked a Jewish community until the last decade of the sixteenth century – now became one of the leading cities in the Empire. Major shifts affected smaller Jewish communities elsewhere as well. For example, the community of Valona shrank considerably while the communities of Monastir (Bitola in present-day Macedonia) and Sarajevo grew substantially. The community of Edirne (Adrianople) that had greatly expanded during the seventeenth century returned to its former size during the eighteenth century. Through the entire period examined here, migration to the Land of Israel persisted from all regions of the Jewish world, from within the Empire and from without. The key destinations of such migration were the four "holy cities" – Jerusalem, Tiberias, Safed, and Hebron – although the numbers of migrants was never great. These communities and their inhabitants received their principal economic support from the Jewish communities of the Diaspora.[5]

[5] Jacob Barnai, *The Jews in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century: Under the Patronage of the Istanbul Committee of Officials for Palestine* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1992); Minna Rozen, *The Jewish Community of Jerusalem in the Seventeenth Century* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1984); Matthias B. Lehmann, *Emissaries of The Holy Land* (Stanford, 2014).

Simultaneous with this seventeenth-century ebb in migration flows coming from Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christian lands, and its effective termination in the eighteenth century, there was a large-scale emigration of Ottoman Jews to Europe and North Africa. They were especially drawn to existing Levantine and Sephardic communities in Italy, Holland, Hamburg, and London. We lack exact numerical data on the extent of this emigration, although it is recognizable from the movement of individual personalities, rabbis, and other clergy. Even figures on the number of Jews residing in the Empire's Jewish communities during the eighteenth century remain uncertain, since from the end of the sixteenth century government officials tended to recycle figures from earlier censuses rather than count anew. Nevertheless, the data and assessments available to us from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offer a rough sense of the size of these communities, which can be stated as follows: 25–30,000 Jews in Istanbul from the seventeenth to the turn of the nineteenth centuries; 20,000 in Salonika until 1620, with around 15,000 there until the beginning of the eighteenth century, though fewer during the remainder of the century; around 8,000 Jews in Izmir from the last third of the seventeenth century, with a similar figure for Cairo (we lack reliable figures for Cairo, whose numbers vary from 3,000 to 10,000); and 3–6,000 in Aleppo, Damascus, and Edirne in the seventeenth century, as well as in Jerusalem (for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). Aside from such major communities, large numbers of Jews resided in smaller urban and town communities: between 1,000 and 1,500 (200–400 families) in such places as Bursa, Üsküb (Skopje), Nigbolu (Nicopol), Tirkala (Trikkala), Monastir (Bitola); with a great many communities containing a few hundred Jews, such as Buda, Vidin, Sofia, Filibe (Plovdiv), Livadiya, Silistra, Serres, Karaferia (Veroya), Yanina, Yenisehir (Larissa), Kavala, Istip, Valona, Patras, Lepanto, Mistra, Thebes, Manisa (Magnesia), Rhodes, Alexandria, Gaza, Safed, Acre, Sidon, Alexandretta; in addition to countless locales with Jewish households numbering only in the dozens. Aside from these Jewish settlements in the Balkans, Anatolia, Egypt, and Syria, many Jews lived under Ottoman rule in the regions of the Black Sea (for example, around 2,000 in Caffa), Crimea, Georgia, Transylvania, Baghdad, North Africa, and Yemen.

JEWISH STATUS AND RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

As in previous centuries, in this period too an individual's religion determined his legal and social position within the Ottoman Empire. It determined both his group affiliation and his individual status. The principle of the supremacy of Islam and of Muslims over all other religions was the

basis of the Empire's entire legal and social approach to adherents of other faiths. Although Jews and Christians benefited from the religious toleration that made it possible for them to worship formally (if discreetly and without fanfare), their inferiority was nevertheless patent. It found expression not merely in their subordinate legal status, in discriminatory taxes, and in restrictions on the exercise of authority over Muslims, but also primarily in their public humiliation and degradation. Laws were instituted which aimed to prevent close social contact with the Muslim population and to ensure separation from Muslim society.

While in the classical period of Ottoman rule many of these decrees and regulations were not enforced in daily life, starting in the 1580s a marked deterioration took place and such regulations were implemented as part of a more aggressive policy against religious minorities. For example, in 1577, decrees were published restricting the dress of Jews as well as the color of their clothing and headwear, while also imposing strictures on the entry of Jewish men and women to public bathhouses when Muslims would be present – or the requirement that distinct towels and a bell around their necks be worn when entering. Jews faced criticism for appearing at public events and festivals, while the keeping and trading of slaves and the employment of Muslim maidservants were newly prohibited.[6] However, the most important, influential, and long-term development was the growing opposition voiced by the Muslim population to the presence of Jewish homes within their own environs, and in particular to the existence of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries in Muslim neighborhoods, especially those in close proximity to mosques.[7]

[6] Regulations on possession of and trade in slaves were not systematically enforced – see Yaron Ben-Naeh, "Slavery and Slaves in Ottoman-Jewish Society" [Hebrew], *Ha-Mizraḥ he-Ḥadash* 50 (2011), 66–90; Rossitsa Gradeva, *Rumeli Under the Ottomans, 15th–18th Centuries: Institutions and Communities* (Istanbul, 2004), 234–7; Haim Gerber, *Crossing Borders* (Istanbul, 2008), 38–42, 69. On restrictions and discrimination in the use of public bathhouses, see, for example, Stefan Andreev, ed., *Ottoman Documents on Balkan Jews, XVIth–XVIIth Centuries* (Sofia, 1990), 33 (Doc. No. XXI, April 15, 1680); Amnon Cohen, *Jewish Life Under Islam: Jerusalem in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), 138–9; Gradeva, *Rumeli Under the Ottomans*, 259. On the hostility and anti-Jewish activities of the Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha, see Pál Fodor, "An Anti-Semite Grand Vizier? The Crisis in the Ottoman–Jewish Relations in 1589–1591 and its Consequences," in Fodor, *The Quest of the Golden Apple* (Istanbul, 2000), 191–206. For an overview of Jewish relations with seventeenth-century Ottoman society, Yaron Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans* (Tübingen, 2008), 99–161.

[7] See Nicolas Vatin, "Comment disparut le cimetière de Kasimpaşa (1582–1592): Un difficile arbitrage du Sultan entre ses sujets juifs et musulmans," in Antonis Anastasopoulos, ed., *Political Initiatives "From the Bottom Up" in the Ottoman Empire* (Rethymno, 2012), 119–33; Andreev, *Ottoman Documents*, 21; Gradeva, *Rumeli Under the Ottomans*, 253 n. 1.

In various towns in the Empire, in both European and Asian regions, Jews had resided in neighborhoods, and sometimes even within individual buildings, alongside Muslims and Christians. This included neighborhoods comprised of majority Muslim and Christian residents, even in sections and regions where the overall majority was Jewish. In contrast with Christian Europe, there were no governmental policies requiring the ghettoization of Jews. Jews lived in sections packed with adherents of other faiths, and even their shops and businesses not infrequently stood alongside those of Muslims, as well as Greek Christians and Armenians.

Nevertheless, toward the last quarter of the sixteenth century, we find a growing tendency on the part of the zealous Muslim public, religious scholars, and the government to remove Jews – and, in particular, Jewish religious institutions – from their midst. Local and central governments alike succumbed to these tendencies, and in a number of cities Jews were forced to leave their homes for new regions. From the seventeenth century on, a number of influential factors combined to strengthen this trend within the Ottoman local and central administrations, resulting, in more than a few towns, in the removal of Jews and their synagogues from the city center to the suburbs and outskirts. Sometimes open spaces were created as a result of the frequent fires that might entirely consume nearby areas and neighborhoods, thus facilitating the imposition of this policy, since it was forbidden for Jews (and Christians) to rebuild their places of worship or even private homes.[8] Major fires that periodically broke out and the epidemics that spread in their wake, not to mention earthquakes, could result in the complete displacement of Jews from a given city, and to the destitution of entire Jewish communities.[9]

[8] See, for example, on the process of removing Jews from their residential districts in Istanbul after the great fire of 1660: Uriel Heyd, "The Jewish Communities of Istanbul in the Seventeenth Century," *Oriens* 6 (1953), 299–314; Marc David Baer, "The Great Fire of 1660 and the Islamization of Christian and Jewish Space in Istanbul," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36 (2004), 159–81; Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford, 2008), 81–104, 274–8; Timur Kuran, ed., *Social and Economic Life in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Glimpses From Court Records*, vol. I (Istanbul, 2010), 548–637, nos. 288, 292, 293, 295–6, 299–300, 306, 312, 314, 320, 323–4 (on synagogues and private houses); 298, 301–5, 308, 310–11, 313, 328, 331 (on churches).

[9] See, for instance, the description of the aftermath of the fire in Monastir in the responsa collection of R. Samuel De Medina, "Yoreh De'ah" (Salonika, 1594), item 143 ("and they said, now many have lost their places and must go to where their hearts may take them and only a few among the many remain in each of the synagogues"); R. Isaac Adarbi, *Divre Rivot* (Salonika, 1586), item 387; R. Solomon Hacohen, *Responsa* (Salonika, 1586), item 36 ("they contemplate that due to the fire they will flee to another town"). On the effects of earthquakes and fires in Adrianople (Edirne) and in Izmir, see Me'ir Benayahu, "The Great Fires of Izmir and Adrianople" [Hebrew], *Reshumot* (n.s.) 2 (1946), 144–54;

The use of public pressure and governmental decrees to force Jews into new territories, as well as their voluntary departure in the wake of fires, plagues, and natural disasters, or as a result of internal migration rooted in economic circumstances, led to the creation of new communal frameworks. These were no longer constructed – as had previously been the case – on the basis of forms derived from the countries of origin at the time of their immigration into the Empire. Moreover, the establishment of new Jewish neighborhoods, or of concentrations of Jews in other settlements, was accompanied by a host of difficulties, such as the opposition of local Christian and Muslim populations, and the exaction of payments by the authorities and by powerful individuals, in particular with regard to all matters relating to the establishment of synagogues and other religious institutions, or their renovation.[10] Despite all of this, in the majority of the cities in the Empire's European and Asian regions, Jews continued to reside within Muslim and Christian neighborhoods, even if most Jews tended to concentrate in separate sections, which themselves often included Muslims and Christians living alongside Jews.

The Jews' incorporation into the surrounding society was publicly visible on a number of levels. Coffee houses, present already in sixteenth-century Istanbul and Cairo and flourishing in these and other cities by the end of the century, also attracted members of the non-Muslim population, Jews included. To the regret of the rabbis, there were also Jews who visited coffee houses even on the Sabbath, where customers, in addition to drinking coffee and smoking tobacco and other intoxicants, soaked up the sociable and leisurely atmosphere. Jews and Christians engaged in the production of wine and its sale in taverns, and, despite the religious prohibition, Muslims too thronged to visit such places. The production and sale of wine by Jews and Christians were typically viewed by officials and clergy as encouraging disturbances, criminality, and hooliganism. Such allegations and efforts to restrict the sale of wine had arisen in earlier periods too, but by the end of the sixteenth century they became more frequent and were often accompanied by penalties and collective punishment.[11]

Eliezer Bashan, "Fires and Earthquakes in Izmir in the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries and a Document on the Accusation against the Jews of Lighting the Fires" [Hebrew], in Bashan, *The Studies of Eliezer* (Lod, 2007), 378–92.

[10] See, for instance, Haim Gerber, *Economic and Social Life of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th Centuries* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1982), 16–17, 121–2; Rossitsa Gradeva, "From the Bottom Up and Back Again Until Who Knows When: Church Restoration Procedures in the Ottoman Empire, Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries," in Anastasopoulos, ed., *Political Initiatives*, 135–63, esp. 140, 156 n. 123, 159.

[11] Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, 115–19, 28; Hélène Desmet-Grégoire and François Georgeon, eds., *Cafés d'Orient revisités* (Paris, 1997).

During Muslim holidays, governmental celebrations and festivals, or at the sultan's family events, Jews frequently joined in parades (for instance, marching as a group as guild members), and even as performers. According to the accounts of foreign visitors and diplomats, as well as Ottoman sources, Jews took on such roles as acrobats, firework operators, dancers, and musicians. On more than one occasion, Jews joined in with the common folk and the general public in popular Muslim religious festivals during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as events in the Eyüp mosque in Istanbul or those connected with Muslim saints and contemporary Muslim religious figures. Jewish women treated Muslim victims of plague in their homes in Istanbul in exchange for payment, and Jewish dealers in male and female slaves purchased non-Muslim girls, trained them in the Muslim lifestyle, culture, and manners of the surrounding Islamic society, and then sold them to Muslims.

Jews' engagement with the surrounding society, including both Muslims and Christians, played out on a daily basis and encompassed virtually all areas of experience. This found expression in the home, the marketplace, in shops, in the streets, and at public events. Many of the Jews involved were members of guilds, including both artisans and merchants. Others found themselves in constant contact, through their economic activities as peddlers, merchants, and business partners, with Muslims and Christians. They traveled with them in caravans and on highways, sailed with them on ships, sat with them in coffee houses, and even bathed with them in public bathhouses.

However, the encounter between Ottoman Jews and Muslims also operated within the framework of the economic and administrative activities of the upper sectors of society. Jewish advisors and experts in administration and finance, bankers to the powerful elite and governmental corporations (*sarraf*), moneychangers, suppliers, and provisioners to the army and the seraglio, those with connections to local and central governments, likewise military suppliers (particularly to the Janissaries) of finance and equipment, publicans, lessees (of revenue and taxes, of mints and customs) and physicians[12] – all these and others like them acted in constant coordination with agents of government and administration. Others served as representatives, middlemen, and brokers (sensals) of European trading colonies (designated in the contemporary terminology as "nations") that resided in the Empire's port cities and commercial centers and constituted a key component in the

[12] On Jewish physicians in the Ottoman Empire, see Rhoads Murphey, "Jewish Contributions to Ottoman Medicine, 1450–1800," in Avigdor Levy, ed., *Jews, Turks and Ottomans: A Shared History through the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse, NY, 2002), 61–74, 301–4; Eleazar Gutwirth, "Language and Medicine in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire," in Jürgen Helm and Annette Winkelmann, eds., *Religious Confessions and the Sciences in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden, 2001), 79–95; Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, 132–8, 283–5.

import and export activities of western companies.[13] Jewish translators were also quite common and functioned mostly in the service of foreign delegations, on diplomatic and reconnaissance missions (as well as serving as tour guides), for European bodies, or even in the service of the Ottoman government itself.[14] Particularly prominent were the personal connections between Jews and Janissaries. The dismantling of this militia and the elimination in 1826 of its rebellious units entailed the fall of prominent Jews in Istanbul, such as Isaiah Adjiman and Bekhor Isaac Carmona, whose great wealth and influence had elevated them among their coreligionists in Istanbul and throughout the Empire.

An additional realm of life which brought Jews, like other *dhimmis*, into regular contact with the surrounding society was the Muslim law courts which they utilized, sometimes through compulsion (as a result of conflicts and disputes with Muslim or Christian litigants) and at other times voluntarily (Jews did so frequently, though differing from locale to locale, despite the Jewish prohibition on resorting to gentile courts).

These manifold interactions with the surrounding Muslim society, with the European Christian merchant colonies and their diplomatic representatives, as well as with governmental circles and Muslim religious scholars, intensified the phenomenon of conversion to Islam and even to Christianity, which became particularly pronounced by the second half of the seventeenth century.[15] The majority of converts were men whose motives were principally socio-economic self-advancement and the overall improvement of their

[13] See, for instance, Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (Cambridge, 1999); on Egypt and Salonika, note 4 above. On the central position of Jewish merchants in French commerce with Istanbul in the eighteenth century, see, for instance, Edhem Eldem, "Structure et acteurs du commerce international d'Istanbul au XVIII^{e} siècle," in Daniel Panzac, ed., *Les Villes dans l'Empire ottoman. Activités et sociétés* (Paris, 1991), 246–7, 252–6, 259–60, 271.

[14] On Jewish translators, see, for instance, Joseph R. Hacker, "An Emissary of Louis XIV in the Levant and the Culture of Ottoman Jewry" [Hebrew], *Zion* 52 (1987), 34–6, 39–42; Eliezer Bashan, "Jewish Dragomans in the Service of the British Consulates in the Middle East, 1581–1825" [Hebrew], in *Meḥkarei Eliezer* (Ashkelon, 2007), 255–73. For an example of a tourist guide and a translator, see Joseph R. Hacker, "Raphael Levi, Ahmed Bashi, Mehmed Bashi, Louis de Bizance – The Transmutations of a Jew from Istanbul in the Seventeenth Century" [Hebrew], in Aharon Mirsky, Avraham Grossman, and Yosef Kaplan, eds., *Exile and Diaspora* (Jerusalem, 1988), 479–516.

[15] Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Jewish Converts to Islam and to Christianity in the Ottoman Empire During the 16th–18th Centuries" [Hebrew], in Michael Abitbol, Yom Tov Assis, and Galit Hasan-Rokem, eds., *Hispano-Jewish Civilization After 1492* (Jerusalem, 1997), 3–30; Hacker, "Raphael Levi," 503–16; Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, 133–8, 284–5; Eyal Ginio, "Childhood, Mental Capacity and Conversion to Islam in the Ottoman State," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 25 (2001), 90–119, esp. 98–9, 112, 116–17.

circumstances by individuals close to the government. There were also men and women who converted in response to economic disputes over inheritances, or to avoid harsh penalties for illegal acts, or as a consequence of sexual relations with Muslims. At the same time, episodes of false accusation leveled against Jews for disgracing Islam or insulting Mohammed were not uncommon, resulting in a choice of execution or conversion; and there were also instances involving the forced conversion of Jewish children to Islam. Alongside these were cases of adventurers who apostasized in order to serve in the military, or occasional individuals who converted out of ideological conviction.[16]

Even so, the number of converts was apparently not high. Those becoming Christians fled the Empire to save themselves, whereas those who became Muslims generally suffered little at the hands of the community they left behind. Only a relative handful of converts engaged in anti-Jewish propaganda or in disputations with their former coreligionists. At any rate, the general impression was that they neither presented a serious danger to the public welfare nor provoked difficult challenges along the lines of converts in Christian lands. Of course, this was hardly the case with the apostasy of the false messiah Sabbatai Zevi, in September 1666. In his wake, a number of his followers converted too, even though the majority remained in the Jewish fold. Many fled from the Empire, particularly following Sabbatai's death in 1676. Initially, Edirne served as the center for his (post-apostasy) followers, numbering about 200 families. Following his death, they shifted their activities to Salonika. Between 1680 and 1686, around 300 Sabbatean families from Salonika and its environs converted to Islam under the leadership of rabbis Solomon Florentin and Joseph Filosoph. They continued to practice Judaism secretly in accordance with the teachings of Sabbatai Zevi. They still believed in him and expected the future messiah to be his reincarnation. These converts formed a secret sect known as the *Dönmeh* ("converts") that persisted into the twentieth century, practicing endogamy and refusing to marry actual Muslims.

This mass conversion to Islam would have serious consequences for the Jewish community of Salonika, not merely from a demographic standpoint, but also in terms of the fallout from the struggles, divisions, and disputes that tore at the fabric of Jewish life in the city from the end of the

[16] On Jewish converts out of conviction during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and on the polemical literature against Judaism, see Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, 2011), 114–16 (148–56 on forcing conversion to Islam); Camilla Adang and Sabine Schmidtke, eds., *Contacts and Controversies Between Muslims, Jews and Christians in the Ottoman Empire and Pre-Modern Iran* (Würzburg, 2010) (articles by Judith Pfeiffer, Camilla Adang, and Sabine Schmidtke, 15–82).

seventeenth through the first half of the eighteenth century. More broadly, the episode inflicted deep moral and spiritual damage on the Ottoman Jewish population as a whole, and in particular on its rabbinic elite, many of whose members in a number of communities had joined the movement early on. The Jews became a laughing stock in the eyes of Christians in the Empire and in the eyes of many European travelers and diplomats who described these events at great length.[17]

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION, ADMINISTRATION, AND ECONOMY OF JEWISH SOCIETY

The organizational apparatus of Jewish self-government continued to function on the basis of models that had been formed already in the sixteenth century, although a certain number of changes and developments can also be detected. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jews residing in cities and towns throughout the Ottoman Empire were seen by the Ottoman authorities as perpetuating earlier communities that had been established on the basis of their founders' countries of origin. In the general censuses and tax rolls they were listed in such a form, while new communities that had not been organized on the same principle, but evolved over time, were listed alongside them. For the most part, these new communities were based not on their members' places of origin from outside the Empire (with the exception of Portuguese immigrants settling in Izmir), but rather on their former cities and towns within the Empire. Over the years most had been established on new foundations, such as local interests, neighborhoods and geography, the initiative and support of men of means, or on the basis of family and clan.[18] These too were represented by the elected communal administration, as had been the case in the past. The communal leadership chosen by its members represented them collectively in judicial or administrative deliberations before Muslim judges in matters affecting the

[17] On Christian hostility and stratagems, see, for example, Gradeva, *Rumeli Under the Ottomans*, 259–61, 302; Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 148–50, 210–11; Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 115–29. On Sabbatai Zevi and the Sabbatean movement in the Ottoman Empire, see Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Zevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676* (Princeton, 1973); and chapter 18 in this volume, by Matt Goldish.

[18] See Joseph R. Hacker, "Communal Organization Among the Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire (1453–1676)" [Hebrew], in Avraham Grossman and Yoseph Kaplan, eds., *Kehal Yisrael: Jewish Self-Rule Through the Ages*, vol. II (Jerusalem, 2004), 287–309; Yaron Ben-Naeh, "The Organisation of the Jewish Community and its Leadership in the Ottoman Empire in the 17th–19th Centuries" [Hebrew], in Grossman and Kaplan, eds., *Kehal Yisrael*, 341–7; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 164–316.

community and its assets, or before the local governor, the tax collector, or other authorities. As in the past, community members were organized around their synagogue and participated in its group activities. They benefitted from the wide range of services the community provided. Their children studied in the community's educational institutions. Quarrels in which members became embroiled or rights that individuals wished to assert, as well as economic disputes between partners, were all adjudicated through the framework of the communal courts. The needy members were supported by benevolent societies, and the deceased were buried by the burial society in the community's lot.

As the sixteenth century wore on, disagreements mounted and divisions multiplied within the various Jewish communities. Groups of Jews stemming from a variety of regions now joined communities that had been founded on the basis of a different geographic origin with its distinct language, culture, and even styles of prayer. Likewise, in the second half of the sixteenth century, clusters of communities from common backgrounds (such as Iberian refugees) began to form supra-communal bodies, whether for purposes of absorbing new immigrants into their city or for other specific reasons. In Istanbul, the communities that emerged from the experience of *sürgün* (having been forcibly relocated by the Ottoman state) began to unite with "voluntary" communities (*kendi gelen*) to establish their own common organizational and administrative frameworks. These developments, alongside the gradual erosion of cultural and mental differences between communities of different origin (as a result of the Sephardic hegemony and the resulting "Sephardization" of non-Iberian communities), all contributed to a blunting of distinctions between groups in terms of their customs, lifestyles, and styles of prayer (excepting Ashkenazim and Romaniyot who continued to hold fast to their distinct devotional practices), as well as their overall culture and self-organization.

In addition, such internal divisions in the community compounded the difficulties of administration and effective representation to the central and local authorities, which naturally became wasteful and inefficient because of the duplication caused. Consequently, this resulted in a trend toward the centralization and concentration of administration, both through the rise of a single central self-governing structure and through the appointment of a *shtadlan* who concentrated in his person the role of representative and lobbyist to the government, particularly in matters of taxation. Thus, even Salonika, which previously lacked fixed centralized administrative institutions, established such a management regime in 1614. By the start of the sixteenth century, the figure responsible in Istanbul for representing the entire Jewish community before the government in all matters of taxation had the title of *kahya.* This was also the case in Rhodes after 1523. In

Istanbul at the beginning of the seventeenth century, this function was filled by Avraham Reuven, well known through his positive connections with the British ambassador there as well as for his literary work. In other cities as well during the seventeenth century, we find references to the *kahya* of the Jews. In Bursa, early in the seventeenth century, it is the *kahya* who supervises in the transmission of taxes; in Izmir in 1673, we hear of the *kahya* of the city's Jews; while in Sofia, such an administrative centralization appears by the end of the seventeenth century. A similar centralization of representational functions is found among contemporary Christians in the Balkans, including both details of the selection process and information regarding the employment of the *kahya.*[19]

The close of the sixteenth century marked an important turning point with regard to the jurisdictional purview and reach of the congregational legal courts in Istanbul, and the rabbis (*marbitze torah*) who led them. The Jews of the city established a committee that likewise possessed exclusive legal authority to make and implement rulings relating to occupancy rights established there. This body, referred to as the "committee of property officers" (*va'ad memunei ha-ḥazakot*), acquired the authority to adjudicate in all disputes and quarrels relating to the ownership of real property, as well as regarding the respective rights of tenants and landlords and their signed contracts. This authority was clearly laid out in regulations signed by the leaders of all the congregations in the city in 1577.

Evidently, during the first decade of the seventeenth century, the city fathers, along with the rabbis, took a further step. They established an additional body, the "committee on ritual prohibitions and permissions" (*'isur ve-heter*), which also functioned in relation to the entire urban community. This body developed by degrees, exercising increasingly broad powers over the course of the eighteenth century. The public authorized this body to act as a special court, and to decide in all matters of Jewish ritual "do's and don't's." Naturally, it became a determinant in all areas of religion and ethics. Initially, it focused on questions of dietary law or *kashrut* (particularly relating to meet, cheese, and wine) and on the fitness of, and procedures used by, those involved in the preparation of food and drink. But later the committee widened its scope to encompass every halakhic matter, such as keeping the Sabbath, family relations, circumcision, marriage, burial and mourning, among others. The committee was comprised largely of rabbis who served as judges in their own congregations, as well as of additional jurists, and it carried out

[19] C. Orhonlu and G. Baer, "Ketkhuda," in *Encyclopaedia Islamica* (Leiden, 1997), IV, 893–4; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 203–5; Gardeva, *Rumeli Under the Ottomans*, 267–9.

punishments and exacted penalties and fines on violators brought before the city leaders. It even initiated and instituted binding regulations and rules of conduct for all Jews in the city.[20]

Here we see a process that would limit the judicial activity of individual judges and rabbis to their communal framework, while creating a system of joint municipal supervision for all the Jews in the city. This developed, moreover, on top of the establishment of a superior court for the city, one that was already functioning during the fifteenth century under the leadership of Rabbi Moses Capsali, who created it as an institution for dealing with supra-communal appeals and rulings. The shift from authority rooted in a congregational framework to one vested in citywide bodies is also reflected in the appointment of "general" rabbis who enjoyed broad authority and jurisdiction over the entire community rather than just one specific congregation, a transformation evident from the seventeenth century onward in many communities, including Istanbul, Izmir, Salonika, and Adrianople (Edirne). However, the majority of rabbis remained employees of the congregation or of the general public, and their power and influence as a group and a force shaping Jewish society and its governance did not decline dramatically. Nevertheless, congregational leaders, members of the *mahamad* in each congregation and of the municipal *mahamad*, remained the central factor in the governance of public affairs and the shaping of public policy.

There was, to be sure, an elite group that, though neither formalized nor elected, nevertheless exerted the greatest influence on the character and manner of Jews' representation before the authorities. These were the men who had accumulated great wealth and who were close to key figures in the central Ottoman government in the capital or in their residential districts. These included physicians and diplomats, army suppliers for the Janissaries or the imperial palace, bankers and arbitragers, or large-scale lessees of property. They intervened periodically in public appointments, including of rabbis, to which they might appoint their cronies. They contributed philanthropically to religious and cultural causes, such as the establishment and funding of academies (*yeshivot*), synagogues, and study houses. They subsidized authors in printing their works, supported scholars and the destitute and needy, and provided funds for the ransoming of captives and assistance to the poor in the Land of Israel. In Egypt, the wealthy stratum was comprised mostly of lessees, tax collectors, and managers and agents of the mint; in Izmir, of large-scale merchants and tax collectors. As the political climate began to harm Jews' relations with the central government

[20] See Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, *The Istanbul Court Record in Matters of Ritual and Ethics, 1710–1903* [Hebrew] (Lod, 1999).

in the second half of the seventeenth century (see below), and amidst growing competition from Armenians, Jews were removed from many of the choicest economic positions in the fields of leasing, tax collection, and banking in Istanbul and Egypt. This decline damaged the Jewish community as a whole since it also meant that many Jewish assistants and clerks who served the lessees and constituted their operational arm would be peeled away from the system too.

A deep chasm between rich and poor had been characteristic of Ottoman Jewish society from its inception. This gap grew ever wider throughout the period here under consideration. The percentage of Jewish poor within the urban communities (where the great majority of Jews resided) rose far out of proportion to that of the rich and middling strata combined, as the state tax rolls attest since taxes were paid through a three-fold ranking. The expansion of the Jewish population during the second half of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries, and the prolonged Ottoman social and economic crisis that followed from military setbacks and monetary shifts in the world economy, substantially increased the number of poor and the extent of the general impoverishment. Consequently, tensions between different strata of Jewish society intensified and the community was increasingly forced to divert a major portion of its resources to charity and poor relief. The educational levels of the masses also began to decline, and grumblings could be heard in Istanbul, Izmir, and elsewhere regarding an increasing laxity of religious observance and mounting illiteracy among Jews. In a society in which concepts of honor lay at the center of human consciousness, a situation of total dependency on others, the inability to earn a living or even satisfy basic needs of food and raiment, and a sense of utter insecurity produced enormous frustration.[21] The deteriorating situation of the mass of poor Jews found expression in the housing of Jews throughout the Empire. Ottoman sources make frequent reference to Jewish housing (*Yahudihane*) as an identifiable category of structures housing many families in dense and degraded conditions, sharing a single courtyard, water, and toilets. Similarly, many of the poor resided in structures funded through *hekdeshim*, a form of philanthropic religious endowment. This situation often provoked opposition to their erection in close proximity to Muslim homes, while Christian and Muslim travelers not infrequently remarked on their foul odor with disgust.

[21] On these matters, see Yaron Ben-Naeh, "Poverty, Paupers and Poor Relief in Ottoman Jewish Society," *Revue des Études Juives* 163, 1–2 (2004), 151–92; Ben-Naeh, "Honor and its Meaning Among Ottoman Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* (n.s.) 11, 2 (2005), 19–50.

The stratum of wretched urban poor, whose numbers only expanded in the eighteenth century, weighed heavily on the budgets of individual congregations and on the urban community as a whole. Most of the budgetary allocations of the communities of Istanbul and Jerusalem during the eighteenth century were devoted to paying the poll tax for hundreds of poor households that could not even manage the modest assessment imposed upon them. The revenue for these expenditures, as well as to pay the interest on communal debts, was provided by internal taxation of members and from income derived through the *gabella*, a tax placed on meat and cheese. And when these proved insufficient, a tax could also be imposed on wine. In a number of congregations, the *gabella* was also imposed on various products traded in the city by merchants, even foreign ones who did not reside there.

The damaging fires that occurred frequently in the large cities of the Ottoman Empire containing sizable Jewish populations also dealt a considerable economic blow to both the community at large and the individual. In Istanbul, Salonika, Izmir, and Adrianople, huge fires broke out every several decades or so. In the process, entire neighborhoods would be consumed, with their congested wooden houses and buildings, and there were lives lost along with substantial amounts of property. These communities struggled to rebuild their public institutions, synagogues, study houses, and religious schools, and individuals sought to salvage their homes, which might otherwise sit derelict for generations. Those who did not manage to rebuild would probably become poor and needy, while the residents of community-owned *hekdeshim* – whose residential or commercial leases might not be renewed – became homeless. During and following such fires, incidents of robbery often occurred, and, soon after, disease afflicting many of the survivors frequently spread. These developments led to the decline of the established economic elite and to the rise of new elements.

Individuals who fell into bankruptcy, or single households in economic distress, could receive assistance and support from the larger clan, which would be mobilized for the help of the needy. The Jewish family structure in the Empire continued to be patriarchal and the members of the wider family circle maintained close ties. The basic family core continued to serve as the touchstone, center of gravity, and guide, even after the young were married off. Marriages that might be arranged at a very tender age, as young as 10, would often result in young girls becoming attached to their in-laws' household, and in mothers-in-law exerting a shaping influence on the character of the young family. In many cases, and in particular in the families of artisans, merchants, and members of craft guilds, the groom became the apprentice of his father-in-law as stipulated in the marriage

contract, and the couple was maintained by the bride's parents for a number of years. Marriages between members of extended families, not to mention between individuals from the same place of origin, were widespread, although unions between members of different Jewish ethnic subgroups were also not rare. Family members were not infrequently organized according to a clan or quasi-tribal framework, based on considerations of solidarity and common interests. Mutual reliance provided economic and social security to clan members, protection against external plots in times of need, and support for the advancement of familial interests. In addition, the value system of the Iberian Jewry refugees did not undergo fundamental change with their transference to the Ottoman Empire. Like their ancestors, they esteemed and glorified lineage (*yihus*), whether real or imagined, regarding it as the most important asset in determining social standing, in marriage, and in public appointments. Also, excellence and accomplishment in the study of the Torah were considered to be great advantages and prized attributes, and often resulted in unions between families of religious scholars and those of the higher economic echelons.

During the last quarter of the sixteenth century and toward the start of the seventeenth, the influence of the Jewish courtiers at the Sultan's court and in the Empire's economic hubs and principal cities reached its apex. Jewish men, and even women, served as counselors, confidants, experts, operatives, and financial managers to members of the Sultan's family, military commanders, governors, and senior administrators. Others – money changers, financiers, and large-scale creditors – managed to obtain sizable leases in partnership with Muslims and Christians, or else individually leased ports, mines, mints, and revenues from entire branches of industry (such as the production of, or trade in, wine) at the center of the state or in its eastern or western provinces.

However, this situation changed recognizably with the rise of fundamentalist religious trends within the Empire and their growing influence on the sultans and heads of state, which resulted in curbs on the freedom of the non-Muslim minorities in the state, especially Jews. These trends picked up momentum with the rise of the Kadizadelis movement founded by Kadizade Mehmed Efendi who exerted a profound impact on the Sultans Murad IV (d. 1640) and his heir Ibrahim (d. 1648). During the second half of the century, another figure from this movement, Vani Mehmed Efendi, persuaded the Sultan Mehmed IV (d. 1687) and the Vizier that the great fire of Istanbul in 1666, in which tens of thousands of people perished, along with the country's recent military defeats and economic crises, were caused by the production and sale of wine by "infidels," and its consumption by Muslims. In 1670, an order was issued

for the destruction of all of the taverns in Istanbul and the surrounding territories, and for a prohibition on the production, purchase, and drinking of wine. The decree also applied to Christians and Jews. This brought an end to the entire field of wine production and the cultivation of grapes for making wine, and generally to the business of vintning in and nearby Istanbul, which had been in the hands of Jews and Christians and had provided a substantial source of revenue for the state.[22]

The effort to push Jews out of the large-scale leasing of state revenue, tax farming, the collection of customs duties, and the leasing of revenues from such areas as mints and ports, created a situation in which the roles of Egyptian Jews had by 1675 virtually come to an end with regard to their roles as tax farmers (*iltizam*), bankers, and moneychangers (*sarrafs*) for the governing officials, with many of them accused of fraud and some even executed.[23] This process derived from the policies of the central government, as well as of the provincial and regional rulers situated far from the center. It was influenced by the fundamentalist spirit that now permeated the Empire, on the one hand, and on the other by the competition that emerged from the Armenians (who frequently took the place of the Jews) and later on from the Greek Catholics migrating from Lebanon and Syria. Most of these economic positions passed, over the course of the seventeenth century, into the hands of the military or the administrative class of Muslim or Turkish ancestry. The number of Jews in these senior positions and in the role of suppliers to the administration and military declined precipitously, even if a fraction managed to hold on to some leading positions, such as that of supplier to the Janissary army. Moreover, no Muslim franchisers engaged Jews as assistants and operatives or sublessees.

Nevertheless, many Jews pursued the alternative route that, by the first decades of the seventeenth century, had opened up in the wake of the capitulation agreements between the Empire and England (and later also Holland, among other powers). The Jews in the Empire's cities and ports

[22] On religious currents generally, and particularly on the Kadizadelis and their influence during the seventeenth century, see Madeline Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600–1800)* (Minneapolis, 1988); Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, 63–80, 105–19; Marinos Sariyannis, "The Kadizadeli Movement as a Social and Political Phenomenon: The Rise of a 'Mercantile Ethic?'" in Anastasopoulos, ed., *Political Initiatives "From the Bottom Up,"* 263–90.

[23] See Michael Winter, "The Jews of Egypt in the Ottoman Period According to Turkish and Arabic Sources" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 16 (1983), 5–21; Shimon Shtober, "'On the Issue of Customs Collectors in Egypt' – Jews as Tax Farmers in Ottoman Egypt" [Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 38 (1989), 68–94; Mohsen Shuman, "The Beginnings of Urban Iltizam in Egypt," in Nelly Hanna, ed., *The State and its Servants: Administration in Egypt from Ottoman Times to the Present* (Cairo, 1995), 17–31.

became prominent in serving as representatives and mediators for companies and groups of European merchants, particularly the French and English, doing business in Ottoman lands.[24] Indeed, they succeeded in creating a veritable brokerage monopoly and often even managed to transfer their privileges to their descendants as an inheritance. In this manner, an economically powerful social stratum emerged, which obtained a special legal status – whether as translators or as citizens of the "nation" of merchants and their agents – as well as the protection of foreign powers and their representatives from the arbitrary power of the local rulers. Such individuals, called "sensals," consolidated a great deal of power in their own hands. As a rule, without them, no import and export trade by foreign merchants was able to take place. This situation was well described in a French report from around 1750:[25]

> The French Nation has to deal here on a daily basis with Turks, Greeks, Armenians and Jews . . . The Jew mixes with and incorporates himself into these three nations without, at the same time, melting into them; he serves them equally, binds them together . . . [Jews are] more dispersed, poorer, but also more united among themselves than all the others: [they are] merchants, workers, travelers, brokers, jobbers, *sarrafs*, practicing all trades, all professions, possessing all the talents and all the vices, obeying only their own laws . . . [I]ngenious, dexterous, great calculators . . ., [they are] often dangerous and always necessary . . . [Through] their activity and thriving they have become the agents of all trading nations here [in Istanbul – J. H.] and all nations [in other places – J.H.], even those of the country, thus become their tributaries.

The power of the Jewish brokers was especially great in Istanbul, Izmir, Aleppo, and Salonika. In Salonika and Istanbul, from the seventeenth century on, English and French merchants had to employ the services of Jewish brokers. The latter received a percentage from the transactions that were carried out and also brokered the purchase of goods and products exported by foreign traders. In the records on Levantine commerce housed in the Marseille archives, one finds dozens of names of Jewish brokers who worked on behalf of the French during each year of the eighteenth century; much the same was the case for Jewish merchants owing money for goods

[24] On capitulations, western-dominated globalized trade in the Empire, and the place of Jews within it, see Edhem Eldem, "Capitulations and Western Trade," in Suraiya Faroqhi, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey,* vol. III: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839* (Cambridge, 2006), 283–335; Eldem, "Structure et acteurs du commerce international d'Istanbul au XVIIIe siècle," in Daniel Panzac, ed., *Les Villes dans l'Empire ottoman: Activités et sociétés*, vol. I (Paris, 1991), 243–71; Daniel Panzac, *Commerce et navigation dans l'Empire ottoman au XVIIIe siècle*, Analecta Isisiana 22 (Istanbul, 1996), 25–110, 159–216; see also n. 4 above.

[25] Quoted in Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *The Ottoman City*, on 158–9 (his translation).

purchased or for Jews who traded in French fabrics. In the years 1730–50, the participation of Jews in French commerce in Istanbul involved approximately one-third of all transactions.[26]

The place of Jews in trade and brokerage with the European commercial powers (particularly the French and English – and, to a lesser extent, the Venetians, whose range of activities had by this time sharply declined) also stood out in Izmir and Aleppo. If we add to this the activities of the Livornese Francos in Aleppo (a portion of whom came under French protection at the end of the seventeenth century), who traded in that city – as well as in Alexandria and Izmir – under French auspices, then we see just how extensive and wide-ranging their activity was. At the cusp of the eighteenth century, there were in Aleppo alone 25 Jews who traded under French protection, and, about 40 years later, Sephardic Jews paid 31 percent of the duty paid by the French in the city.[27]

But despite the brokerage activities and ramified commerce in these centers and in Izmir, the percentage of Jews engaged in international maritime trade declined significantly during the eighteenth century, while the quantity of leased boats and cargo ships destined for Alexandria and the coastal ports of the eastern Mediterranean also became exceedingly small.[28] Indeed, as far as we can tell, the proportion of Jews in international commerce shrank over time, while the number of Jews who individually, or with partners, owned ships proved quite modest.[29]

Through the entire period surveyed here, Jews were also engaged in a wide array of crafts and professions, as was also true of the preceding period. They continued to stand out in several fields, for instance in the processing of

[26] See Eldem, "Structure," 246–7, 250–2, 254–6, 258–9, 260, 266–7; on pp. 269 n. 94 (sensals), 271 (the lists of the Jewish merchants).

[27] See, for example, Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers* (New Haven, 2009), 115–31, 317–22, esp. 118. On the struggles and commercial competition between English merchants and Jewish merchants and brokers, and the contention between them in Aleppo and Izmir, see Daniel Goffman, "Jews in Early Modern Ottoman Commerce," in Levy, *Jews, Turks and Ottomans*, 15–34, 290–6.

[28] See Panzac, *Commerce*; Michael J. Reimer, "Ottoman Alexandria: The Paradox of Decline and the Reconfiguration of Power in Eighteenth-Century Arab Provinces," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient (JESHO)* 37 (1994), 107–46, esp. 127–33. On Izmir and its international trade with France, England, Holland, and Italy, and its share of the commerce in the Empire, see Elena Frangakis, "Izmir – An International Port in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Eighteenth Century (1695–1820)," in *Économies méditerranéennes – équilibres et intercommunications*, vol. I (Athens, 1985), 107–28 (122 on the Jewish sensals and their commission); Daniel Goffman, *Izmir and the Levantine World, 1550–1650* (Seattle, 1990), 93–146, 186–91.

[29] Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden, 1995); Gerber, *Crossing Borders*, 181–202.

precious metals, jewelry making, and the leather and textile industries. They also had a hand in agricultural production and trade as well as in money-lending (even if they borrowed from Muslims and Christians more than they lent to them). They traded in pearls and ostrich feathers, in spices, in coins, in antiquities, and in slaves and maidservants. They were even engaged in fishing and boat taxiing. But the largest segment of the public was occupied principally in all imaginable types of handiwork, simple and complex alike, while quite a few men and women earned their livelihoods as peddlers.[30]

In the Empire's large cities, commercial and artisanal occupations were conducted through the framework of guilds. Jews too were organized into guilds. For the most part, the guilds were mixed in population and included Muslims as well as Christians and Jews, while as a rule a sheyk or Muslim guild master stood at their head. However, there were occasionally cases in which the guild head was a Jew, and there were also guilds comprised entirely of Jews. In terms of the guild type, there were evidently differences between guilds in Arabic-speaking lands and those in Anatolia, Istanbul, and the Balkans. There were also differences from city to city. Guild members possessed vested occupational and professional privileges that they could legally assert in the courts. Some guilds divided members into two hierarchal professional categories while others utilized a three-tiered system. Guild members, Jews among them, presented themselves at public events as a single unified body. Guild membership in the Ottoman Empire was extremely widespread and almost every occupation had its distinctive guild; thus, large cities like Istanbul and Cairo contained many hundreds of them. The position of Jews as members of professional and commercial guilds accorded them a social status and economic weight.[31]

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

The end of the sixteenth century was accompanied by fundamental changes in religious and intellectual trends for the Jews of the Ottoman Empire. If, until that time, most Jews stemming from Iberia, as well as their

[30] Eliezer Bashan, "The Rise and Decline of the Sephardi Communities in the Levant – The Economic Aspect," in R. D. Barnett and W. M. Schwab, eds., *The Sephardi Heritage*, vol. II (Grendon-Northauts 1989), 349–88; Minna Rozen, "La vie économique des juifs du basin méditerranéen . . .," in Shmuel Trigano, ed., *La Société juive à travers l'histoire* (Paris, 1993), 296–352, 529–70; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 319–42.

[31] Suraiya Faroqhi and Randi Deguilhem, eds., *Crafts and Craftsmen of the Middle East* (London, 2005), 3–234; Yaacov Barnai and Haim Gerber, "Jewish Guilds in Istanbul in the Late 18th Century" [Hebrew], *Michael* 7 (1981), 206–26; Gerber, *Crossing Borders*, 111–20; Frédéric Hitzel, *Artisans et commerçants du Grand Turk* (Paris, 2007), 141–79; Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 343–6.

rabbis and intellectuals, continued to cleave to the religious, philosophical, and spiritual heritage rooted in their Iberian education and ethos, by the turn of the seventeenth century matters began to change. Until the end of the sixteenth century, the foundation of youth education was the Torah curriculum derived from communal and general Jewish schools, presented in Hebrew and Ladino (and in Judeo-Arabic among the Musta'arib and Maghrebi Jewish populations). Jewish elementary schools were funded by the congregations, while for the most part the academies (*yeshivot*) were supported by wealthy individuals and administered by *yeshiva* heads who occasionally were also supported by the community in which they resided.

The nucleus of Torah study in the *yeshivot* was the study of the Babylonian Talmud (employing the Castilian *pilpul* method of study known as *iyun* ["analysis"]), as well as the works of the classical legal decisors (*poskim*), in particular the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides. Yet most youngsters discontinued their studies at an early age, while only a minority managed to qualify for *yeshiva* study. Those forced to abandon their formal studies did receive some further training through communal synagogues where the rabbi provided the public with lessons and homilies during weekdays, Sabbaths, and holidays. Nevertheless, students who aspired to become scholars and intellectuals and whose parents were sufficiently well off to pay for their upkeep through the teenage years while forgoing their labor, might manage to continue their studies. Aside from *yeshiva* studies (acquired on their own or through private teachers), they studied language and grammar, logic, philosophy, and science (generally the Aristotelian corpus with its medieval Arabic and Jewish commentaries). Among them were also those who studied medicine, mostly from books and through serving as trainees and apprentices of physicians.

Analysis of the writings of the second or third generation after the Spanish Expulsion makes it clear that their worldview, their manner of expression, the themes and problems that engaged them, along with their entire conceptual approach, were shaped by the rabbinic-halakhic realm, on the one hand, and by rationalist philosophical thought and the Islamic and Christian medieval-scientific outlook, on the other.[32] However, in the final decade of the sixteenth century, Kabbalah, in particular that of the Zohar and of R. Moses Cordovero (1522–70) and his circle in Safed, began competing with philosophy and science as key elements of Jewish learning and Torah wisdom, providing the Ottoman intellectual elite

[32] On all of this, see Joseph R. Hacker, "The Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 95–135.

with a new analytical framework and set of conceptual tools. Kabbalah, the study of which was formerly confined to an elite of individual scholars, burst into the public consciousness after the printing of kabbalistic works in Italy and the blossoming of Kabbalah in Safed. In the final decades of the sixteenth and the start of the seventeenth centuries, Cordoverian Kabbalah spread mightily in printed form, for the most part via works of kabbalistic *musar* ("ethical" literature) produced by Cordovero's students, as well as through his guidance and that of his colleagues and disciples.

Similarly, the legend of R. Isaac Luria (Ha-Ari, 1534–72), of his astonishing personality, began to spread through printed works containing his practices and poetry. The teachings of Luria began to circulate through word of mouth as promulgated by both his genuine and pretended disciples, and through the writings of R. Ḥayyim Vital, R. Israel Saruk, R. Jacob Tsemaḥ, and others.[33] Scholars throughout the Empire, especially Italy, made their way to Safed to draw from its font. With Safed's economic decline and resultant existential crisis at the start of the seventeenth century, the Ari's disciples and enthusiasts scattered to Egypt and Istanbul, to Bursa and Salonika, where they acquired their own students and successors.[34]

The impact of all this on reorienting the religious and cultural character of the Ottoman Jewish community soon became apparent. Kabbalah, its spirit, concepts, symbolism, and terminology quickly penetrated into the exegetical and homiletic writings of Ottoman Jewish scholars. Philosophical jargon and vocabulary, previously dominant, now disappeared. There were scholars who abandoned their earlier styles and thought processes, focusing on Halakhah and *pilpul*, and whose sermons now exhibited an innovative and brilliant style of the latter, while others managed to find a place for Kabbalah alongside earlier modes of thought.

As a result of this kabbalistic influence, especially the Lurianic, the character of Ottoman Jewry's religious practice also changed. Prayers and practices with kabbalistic intonation were incorporated into the prayer book. To various ritual acts were added special mystical "unifications" (*yiḥudim*), while commandments, the lulav, shofar and the like, were

[33] On these spiritual, religious, and cultural processes, see, for example, Boaz Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky: Chapters in the Reception History of the Zohar and the Construction of its Symbolic Value* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2008); Roni Weinstein, *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity* ([Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 2011).

[34] See, for example, Joseph R. Hacker, "The History of the Study of Kabbalah and its Dissemination in Salonica in the 16th Century" [Hebrew], in Rachel Elior and Peter Schäfer, eds., *Creation and ReCreation in Jewish Thought. Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan* (Tübingen, 2005), 165–80.

performed with a prescribed mystical intentionality (*kavanot*). The Jewish calendar was filled up with holidays such as Lag Ba'Omer, the eve of the New Month, the night of Shavuot, and similar occasions, while the study of Torah acquired a new significance and meaning. Utterances and recitations of sacred texts were invested with the capacity to transform the cosmic order, while the authority formerly accorded to intellectual accomplishment and mental acuity was weakened.

Nevertheless, when we look closely at the daily life of the Empire's religious scholars, halakhic experts, and *yeshiva* students, it seems that in terms of the basic day-to-day structure and content of their studies, these changes were not truly revolutionary. It is interesting to note that the famous compendium of law, R. Joseph Karo's *Shulḥan Arukh*, did not penetrate into the world of the sages and *yeshivot*, despite its fame, wide dissemination, reception, printing, and translation. Rather, the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides remained the work most favored by scholars for intensive study and pilpulistic analysis, and during these centuries dozens, if not hundreds, of treatises and novellae were written on it, many of them printed. The best-known included: *Sefer Lehem Mishneh* by R. Abraham de Boton of Salonika (Venice, 1606) and *Sefer Mishneh Lamelekh* by R. Judah Rosanes, published posthumously in Istanbul in 1731.

In this period, Hebrew printing houses were active, even if intermittently, in Istanbul, Salonika, and Izmir. Many hundreds of works, the fruit of the Torah scholars of the Ottoman Empire, were printed by them, along with numerous books by authors from other regions. Especially worth emphasizing are Ottoman responsa collections, and novellae, along with homiletic writings that often managed to be printed in other eighteenth-century centers such as Amsterdam and Livorno. However, these generations of scholars also focused on producing distinguished collections and anthologies of rabbinic literature, their own and those of others. R. Bezalel Ashkenazi, along with his colleagues and students, produced many volumes of the work *Shitah Mekubetset*, in which they reproduced rabbinic discussions of talmudic passages (*sugyot*) in accordance with the tractates of the Babylonian Talmud. R. Ḥayyim Benveniste, in the volumes of his *Hakenesset Hagedolah*, focused on the literature of rabbinic rulings (*pesikah*) according to the order of the fourteenth-century legal code known as the *Arba'a Turim*, by R. Jacob ben Asher, while R. Jacob Chuli and his followers produced the multi-volume Ladino anthology of popular commentaries, the *Me'am Lo'ez*. Also, the anonymous editor of the work *Ḥemdat Yamim* assembled and adapted the crème of the ethical and homiletic literature (*musar ve-drush*) of his times.

Other outstanding scholars and prolific writers were R. Eliyahu Hacohen ("Haitmari") of Izmir (seventeenth century); R. Ḥayyim Joseph David Azulai (Hid"a) (eighteenth century); and R. Ḥayyim Palaggi (Palache) of Izmir (nineteenth century). This was, in all, a great flowering of scholarship and, throughout this period, a considerable number of scholars in the cities of the Empire produced a rich and variegated literature of a remarkably high quality. They maintained extensive ties of communication with one another, and we possess a wide array of correspondence between them, as well as evidence that they gathered for joint study not only in the Land of Israel but elsewhere as well. A number of them stood out for their frequent journeys to the Land of Israel and thence to various parts of Europe, including Italy and Holland. A handful even won rabbinic positions in Venice, Livorno, Amsterdam, Izmir, Cairo, and other congregations in North Africa and Europe.

One of the issues which leaders wrestled with in this period was the education of women, who did not receive regular instruction in Jewish schools. However, there were girls who learned reading and writing in their homes with a private tutor or with their parents. For the most part these were the daughters of well-off or scholarly families. A handful of sources also mention women's synagogues, although it is not always clear whether these refer to a women's quorum or to a synagogue providing aid to women. In a pseudepigraphic composition (falsely) attributed to Sason Hai of the House of Castiel at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the (actual) author, Isaac ben Samuel of Persia, who flourished at the end of the eighteenth century, describes a synagogue in Istanbul in which a benefactor funded various activities, including the financing of a "scholar who enlightens the women and teaches the daughters." He subsequently adds that "my mother [served] there as the prayer leader for the women."[35] Even if we discount this source, it remains the case that, as early as the sixteenth century, Ladino translations of sacred and devotional literature for women began to appear, including Scripture, prayers, moralistic and intellectual works, and even legalistic literature such as the *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* section of the *Shulḥan Arukh*. On similar grounds a Ladino women's prayer book was also printed in Salonika in the middle of the sixteenth century. Initially, basic Jewish works were printed, while original works produced in Ladino only gradually followed. Yet by the eighteenth century

[35] Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, "The Travels of Sason Ḥai of the House of Castiel" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 1 (1956), 166. Recently, Moshe Hillel has demonstrated that this book, which survived in only a single manuscript, was written by Isaac ben Samuel of Persia, who forged several books and claimed authorship for himself or for other known and unknown authors. The issues raised by Hillel require further research. See Moshe Hillel, *The Book of the Concoctor: Isaac Son of Samuel of Persia and his Forged Books* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2017), 1–34, 101–13.

the number of books printed in Ladino had multiplied; many works were translated while original writings also proliferated, such as *Sefer Me'am Lo'ez* and the numerous collections of *koplas* (rhymed Ladino "poems"), not to mention countless translations of stories and tales, and even a Ladino primer on mathematics.[36] Nevertheless, it appears that this productivity was not enough to reverse the Jewish public's general intellectual decline, resulting principally from the deterioration of their economic situation.

Another change that occurred in the cultural sphere of Ottoman Jewry was a new openness and receptivity to the surrounding society's culture and language. This shift too took place only gradually and was a by-product of the community's growing dependence on the economic, administrative, and social surroundings, but it penetrated into all areas of folk life and material culture. Turkish music and song, for instance, made a deep impression on the Jews, and they adapted them to their own songs. Something similar occurred with religious poetry and liturgical songs. Jews likewise copied the style of the material culture around them, the fabrics, furniture, and other such goods. The form of their script and signatures resembled Turkish calligraphy, and the ornamental objects of the synagogues, such as the ark curtains, basins, and decorations, were profoundly influenced by the Ottoman Muslim style – all the more so, the jewelry and clothing of both Jewish men and women.[37]

These deep influences on material culture, on leisure practices and pastimes, and on the character of poetry and music left a peculiar stylistic imprint. It is hardly surprising therefore that, as early as the second half of the seventeenth century, we learn that the Pentateuch was translated into Turkish and in the possession of a Jew in Gallipoli. One can almost certainly conclude from this that, by the 1670s, there were Jews who needed a Turkish

[36] See Ora (Rodrigue) Schwarzwald, ed., *Sidur para mujeres en Ladino, Salónica, siglo XVI* (Jerusalem, 2012); on Ladino printings, see Dov Cohen, "The Ladino Bookcase: Research and Chart" (doctoral thesis, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 2011); Matthias B. Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Ottoman Sephardic Culture* (Bloomington, 2005).

[37] On all of these, see Esther Juhasz, ed., *Hispanic Jewry in the Ottoman Empire: Chapters in their Material Culture* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1989); Vivian B. Mann, "Jewish–Muslim Acculturation in the Ottoman Empire: The Evidence of Ceremonial Art," in Avigdor Levy, ed., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, 1994), 559–83. On music, see, for instance, E. Seroussi, "The Turkish Makam in the Musical Culture of the Ottoman Jews, Sources and Examples," *Israel Studies in Musicology* 5 (1990), 43–68; Seroussi, "From the Court and Tarikat to the Synagogue: Ottoman Art Music and Hebrew Sacred Songs," in Andreas Hammarlund, Tord Olsson, and Elisabeth Özdalga, eds., *Sufism, Music and Society in Turkey and the Middle East*, Transactions of the Swedish Research Institute 10 (Istanbul, 1997), 81–96.

translation of the Bible written in Hebrew letters for purposes of comprehension, since the Hebrew text or Ladino, Greek, or Arabic translations could not satisfy their needs.[38] The fact that we find other texts from the start of the seventeenth century, for the most part historical works, that are written in Turkish with Hebrew letters, indicates that the vernacular was required even for members of the educated stratum.[39] Likewise, the existence of a seventeenth-century homemade Turkish–Hebrew and Arabic–Hebrew dictionary by Jacob Roman of Istanbul suggests that some educated Jews had fully mastered the language and even employed it as a topic of research.[40] Further evidence of the dissemination of Turkish among the Jews is the fact that Turkish-speaking Jews were known to have interrogated Turkish witnesses in cases involving the drowning and murder of Jews and passed along that testimony to Jewish religious courts in the Empire, in order to free women from the status of grass widow (*agunah*) and for other purposes. Likewise, Ladino scholars have identified clear Turkish elements in it as well as in the Hebrew spoken by the Jews of the Empire.[41]

It appears that a number of traditions, styles, and fashions fused together to produce Jewish material and intellectual culture. In the traditional rabbinic segment, this reflected the rich scholarly culture whose roots could be found in the Iberian legacy. Combining both Halakhah and Kabbalah, its fruits were disseminated widely, although the fact of the matter is that its literary output, written and printed in Hebrew (even if communicated to the wider public occasionally in Ladino), was for the most part only apprehended by the scholarly classes. From the eighteenth century forward, attempts were made to make a portion of this legacy available to the broader public in Ladino print.

The non-rabbinic educated stratum and socio-economic elite absorbed influences from western cultures, although the theological and philosophical

[38] See Joseph R. Hacker, "An Emissary of Louis XIV in the Levant and the Culture of Ottoman Jewry" [Hebrew], *Zion* 52 (1987), 42–3; Hannah Neudecker, *The Turkish Bible Translation by Yaḥya Bin Ṣaḥak, Also Called Ḥaki (1659)* (Leiden, 1994).

[39] On the last, see Yaron Ben-Naeh, "Hebrew Sources on the Death of Sultan Osman: A Chapter in Jewish Historiography under Islam," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 42 (2015), 283–363, esp. 288–9.

[40] For other examples of Jewish scholars who knew the language and had familiarity with and knowledge of the surrounding culture in the third quarter of the sixteenth century, see Uriel Heyd, "An Unknown Turkish Treatise by a Jewish Physician to Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent" [Hebrew], *Eretz – Yisrael* 7 (1963), 48–53; Pilar Romeu Ferre, "Turquismos en la Crónica de los Reyes Otomanos de Mosé Ben Baruj Almosnino," *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 37–8 (1988–9), 91–100.

[41] See, for example, the research of David Bunis on Ladino in the periodical *El Prezente* 2 (2008), 177–207; 7 (2013), 115–64; Bunis, "Turkish Influence on Hebrew in the Ottoman Empire," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, vol. III (Leiden, 2013).

issues that engaged western Sephardic Jews found little echo among them. Beside this, they exhibited openness to Ottoman languages and cultures and attuned themselves closely to the goings-on of the surrounding society. Among the wider populace, a dual and bilingual culture emerged: an everyday Ladino spoken language, along with poetry, and folklore, on the one hand; and on the other, adoption of the material culture, lifestyle, music, and pastimes of the surrounding Ottoman society. The latter included the basic knowledge of Turkish even if it did not become the spoken language of the Empire's Jews during this period. For the most part, they spoke Ladino in their schools, homes, and on the street, a language that had absorbed many Hebrew, Turkish, and eventually even European linguistic elements.

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CHAPTER 32

THE JEWS OF ITALY (1650–1815)

FRANCESCA BREGOLI

INTRODUCTION

Although the history of Italian Jews from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries has long fascinated scholars, the approximately two centuries under consideration in this essay (1650–1815) have not fared as well in the annals of Jewish historiography. Attilio Milano went so far as to dub the experience of Italian Jews from 1600 to 1789 as "the age of oppression" in his classic *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (1963).[1] The eighteenth century received especially pessimistic appraisals. The protracted process of ghettoization, widespread demographic decline, economic stagnation, and increasing pauperization, together with an uninterrupted flow of polemical publications against Judaism, were all taken as signs of the progressive deterioration of Italian Jewry throughout the century. For Milano, the "prostration" of the oldest Italian Jewish community, in Rome, summed up the abject conditions of Italian Jewish life, which only the so-called first emancipation upon the arrival of the Jacobin troops in 1796–9 would interrupt. In more recent years, Jonathan Israel has reiterated Milano's view, based on the allegedly dwindling economic prowess of eighteenth-century Italian Jews.[2]

In fact, a revision of the old-fashioned, "lachrymose" interpretation of Italian Jewish history between 1650 and 1815 is long overdue. It is neither feasible nor wise to reduce 200 years of Italian Jewish history to a static past solely marked by stagnation and segregation, relieved only by the momentous arrival of the French "liberators" in 1796. Thanks to a wealth of recent research, it is now possible to offer a more balanced interpretation and show that the period under scrutiny was not an unmitigated low point in the history of Italian Jews.

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[1] Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Turin, 1963), 286–337.

[2] Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (London, 1997), 205.

Providing a comprehensive formulation of the experience of those Jews living in Italy in the decades under consideration is complicated, considering that, until its final unification in 1870, Italy was divided into separate states and the history of its Jews is therefore varied. Although it would be an oversimplification to consider Italy as a mere geographical entity, with no real social or ethnic cohesion before its unification, the country's political fragmentation had obvious repercussions on Jewish life.[3] Between 1650 and 1815, Jews were allowed to settle in the Kingdom of Savoy (except for Sardinia), the Republic of Venice, the Duchy of Mantua, the Duchy of Parma (outside the capital), the Duchy of Modena, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and in some areas of the Papal States. There were no Jewish settlements in the Kingdom of Naples, apart from an unsuccessful experiment between 1740 and 1747, and only a few well-off Jewish merchants were tolerated in Genoa. Each state applied different policies to local Jewish communities. The living conditions, legal status, and opportunities of Jews living in Tuscany, thus, proved very different from those of Jews living in Piedmont or Rome during the same period. (See figure 32.1).

Similarly, the Jews of Italy never shared a single, monolithic culture in the early modern period. Because of a long history of migrations facilitated by the country's strategic position in the Mediterranean Sea, Italy's Jews maintained close ties with a much wider Jewish world than the relatively small Italian context might lead one to think. During the sixteenth century, Jews from the Ottoman Empire and eastern Europe, as well as *conversos* from the Iberian Peninsula, started to settle in Italy alongside local communities dating back to the early medieval period. By 1650, Italy hosted a number of Jewish traditions, including (but not limited to) Italian, Ashkenazic, and Sephardic rites. Jews who spoke, read, and wrote a variety of languages, such as Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, French, Yiddish, and Hebrew, lived in close proximity to one another, practicing different customs and rituals, and pursuing different educational systems and social aspirations.

In addition, significant transformations took place in the broader Italian sphere from 1650 on. The seventeenth century is usually seen as a period of deep economic decline for Italy. However, the severe slump in trade and manufacture caused by the 1630 plague abated gradually after the end of the Thirty Years' War. The conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession (1713) brought about an unprecedented period of stability, which allowed several princes to attempt administrative and economic reforms to

[3] Sergio Della Pergola, "La popolazione ebraica in Italia nel contesto ebraico globale," in Corrado Vivanti, ed., *Storia d'Italia. Annali XI: Gli ebrei in Italia*, II (Turin, 1997), 896–936.

Figure 32.1 The Italian states in 1750.

modernize their states. Spanish influence over Italian politics and culture declined, while Habsburg political authority and French intellectual influence intensified: this too affected local Jewish communities in different ways.

Overall, the period from 1650 up to approximately 1770 marked considerable social and political continuities in Italian Jewish history, whereas

significant intellectual and economic transformations took place throughout the eighteenth century. In many respects, the Napoleonic era constituted a meaningful break with the past, with far-reaching consequences. From 1796 to 1815 (though with some exceptions and an interruption in 1799–1800), legal equality introduced by French rule over most of Italy altered an established status quo and resulted in new political and economic opportunities and challenges for the Jews of Italy. However, the eagerness with which many Jews engaged the new situation shows that this "first emancipation" did not catch them unprepared and that the eighteenth century had provided them with a fruitful laboratory of practices of integration.

JEWS IN THE ITALIAN ECONOMY

With the exception of the Roman community, economic usefulness provided ample justification for the development and growth of Jewish centers in early modern Italy. From 1550 on, Italian rulers sensitive to mercantilist ideas attempted to attract Jewish immigrants from abroad, in the hope that their wide economic networks and their ability to command large capital would boost the state's economy.[4] The most notable achievement of such mercantilist policies was the 1591 establishment of a new Sephardic center in the Medicean port of Livorno (Tuscany), which grew to become the largest Italian Jewish community by 1750.[5] The 1650s brought important changes. From 1645 until the 1660s, several Italian princes issued new favorable edicts addressed to *conversos* and Sephardic Jews, whose arrival was expected to counter the economic stagnation that had followed the 1630 plague and the military despoliation of northern Italy during the Thirty Years' War. The flourishing Livornese community welcomed most of the newcomers, although the Republic of Venice and the Duchy of Modena vied with Tuscany to draw Sephardic traders.[6]

The economic importance of Italian Jews expanded between 1650 and 1710. Sizable Jewish presence in flourishing urban centers reflects this fact. Around the second half of the eighteenth century, the Jewish communities of Livorno (*c.* 4,000), Ancona (*c.* 1,300), and Mantua (*c.* 2,000) amounted to 8–10 percent of the general population; in Ferrara (*c.* 1,800) and Modena

[4] Benjamin Ravid, "A Tale of Three Cities and their "Raison d'État": Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991), 138–62.

[5] Renzo Toaff, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence, 1990); Jean Pierre Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676–1814)*, 3 vols. (Naples, 1998).

[6] Israel, *European Jewry*, 129; Della Pergola, "Popolazione ebraica," 916–17.

(*c.* 1,260), local Jews were 5–6 percent of the general population.[7] The Jews' fields of activity also changed considerably. An increased number of Jews entered commerce and industry in the Republic of Venice, the Duchies of Modena and Mantua, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and in certain areas of the Papal States, such as Ferrara. The second half of the seventeenth century saw growing Jewish participation in the distribution of basic foodstuffs in northern Italy, while new Jewish manufactures gained momentum. Petty commerce was widespread in the entire Italian peninsula among poorer Jews, who mostly lived by selling second-hand goods and rags. Women actively contributed to the Jewish economy at all levels, particularly in the textile and second-hand clothing industry (as embroiderers, button makers, and milliners). There is also considerable evidence of Jewish women working as elementary school teachers, ritual bath and innkeepers, cooks, domestic servants, and shopkeepers.[8]

Despite the worsening decline of the Venetian economy, the Republic's Jews handled a great part of the city's imports of grain, salt, and olive oil from the southern Adriatic Sea, maintaining their economic prominence in the trans-Balkan trade, as well as control over the sale of tobacco and old clothes in Venice itself. Mantuan Jews were equally involved in the sale of grain. In the Papal States, Jews broadened their role in the trade of basic foodstuffs at Ferrara, while Ancona's Jewry increasingly handled the traffic between the Balkans and Italy. The Tyrrhenian port city of Livorno served as the main Mediterranean hub for Dutch and English ships. Livornese Jewish firms with contacts in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire handled the resale of the goods stored in the port's warehouses, which included grains, cloth, spices, and luxury items.[9]

The role of Italian Jews in the fields of crafts and manufactures expanded as well after 1650. On the one hand, the traditional Jewish craft of silk weaving and cloth-production remained the main Jewish industry in Mantua, Padua, Verona, and Turin. On the other hand, Jews introduced new crafts. In the Kingdom of Savoy, they set up new sugar, soap, and tobacco manufactures. Piedmontese Jews were also known as fine silversmiths, while the production of coral, much sought after in India, became one of the principal activities of Livornese Jews. In Venice, where guild restrictions were tighter than in other regions, Jews were involved in a more

[7] Alan Charles Harris, "La demografia del ghetto in Italia (1516–1797 circa)," *La Rassegna mensile di Israel* 23 (1967), 1–61.

[8] Luciano Allegra, "Il lavoro delle donne nel ghetto," in Michele Luzzati and Cristina Galasso, eds., *Donne nella storia degli ebrei d'Italia* (Florence, 2007), 313–27.

[9] Israel, *European Jewry*, 129; Shlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Jerusalem, 1977), 295–6, 306–12.

limited number of manufacturing activities, such as tobacco processing. Farming of taxes and duties was also a common Jewish occupation, for instance in Mantua and Verona. So was the supply of military equipment, such as beds and barracks, in cities such as Rome and Verona.[10] In contrast with other cities, the Roman Jewish community was largely impoverished and burdened with debt. It eked out a living from tailoring, button making, and mending old clothes, though there were also silk and leather workshops in the ghetto.

The second half of the seventeenth century brought about enduring transformations in the field of moneylending and pawn-broking, a staple of medieval Jewish life in Italy. Though not stopping completely, this traditional activity no longer formed the bulk of Jewish economy in the late seventeenth century. Jewish banking activities survived in Piedmont, Mantua, and Modena into the early eighteenth century, and in Venice until the beginning of the nineteenth.[11] However, Pope Innocent XI's decision to suppress Roman Jewish loan-banks in 1682, to the advantage of the Christian *Monti di Pietà* (Church-approved low-interest loan-banks), aimed at breaking the Jewish economy and fostering conversion, had far-reaching repercussions well beyond the Roman ghetto. In Rome, the policy gravely affected the weak finances of the Jewish community, already suffering from severe communal debt, and led entire families to convert to Christianity.[12] From 1683 on, Jewish banks also closed down in all the ghettos of the Papal States, in the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza, in areas of the Mantovano, and in many parts of the Venetian Republic.[13] Although banking occasionally continued clandestinely, the official suppression of loan-banks transformed not only the Italian and Jewish economy, but also the social and political contours and aspirations of Italian Jewry.

The widespread move of Italian Jewish entrepreneurs from banking into commerce and industry continued in the course of the eighteenth century. Except for the Roman community, which lacked a truly wealthy elite, this period marked the consolidation of large patrimonies in fewer hands than in the past, and the growth of a widening gap between rich and poor in Jewish society. A number of Jewish trading families rose to economic and political prominence within their communities. Between the end of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries, families such as the Coen of

[10] Israel, *European Jewry*, 147–9; Renata Segre, "Gli ebrei piemontesi nell'età dell'assolutismo," in *Italia Judaica. Gli ebrei in Italia dalla segregazione alla prima emancipazione: Atti del III Convegno internazionale, Tel Aviv 15–20 giugno 1986* (Rome, 1989), 67–80.

[11] Marino Berengo, "Gli ebrei veneziani alla fine del '700," in *Italia Judaica* III, 9–30.

[12] Mario Rosa, "Tra tolleranza e repressione: Roma e gli ebrei nel '700," in *Italia Judaica* III, 81–98.

[13] Israel, *European Jewry*, 143–5.

Ferrara, the Formiggini of Modena, the Grego of Verona, the Vivante and Treves of Venice, the Finzi of Mantua, the Morpurgo and Costantini of Ancona, and the Franco and Recanati of Livorno solidified large fortunes and emerged as entrepreneurs at the center of successful local, national, and in several cases international commercial networks.[14] Combining financial skills with careful matrimonial strategies in order to consolidate their economic influence and relations, these powerful merchants were able to position themselves as leaders in their communities, while supplying considerable economic services to local rulers. Still, although individual wealth greatly increased during the eighteenth century, the fiscal state of the Jewish community as an institution was on the decline in many Italian regions: the communities of Venice and Padua declared bankruptcy in 1737 and 1761, while in 1755 the Roman authorities registered the local Jewish community among debtors "of little hope."[15]

The addition of a wealthy inland merchant class in northern Italy to the established Sephardic traders already active since the sixteenth century in the Italian port cities of Venice, Ancona, and Livorno was accompanied by a political transformation. In the eighteenth century, Jewish merchants of substantial means established themselves as leaders within the ghetto and as negotiators with the state authorities on behalf of their communities, largely replacing the role that bankers had traditionally played. This trend continued into the Napoleonic period, as the Jewish commercial elite capitalized on the opportunities brought by the changed political scenario, investing in army supplying and the trade of foodstuffs in a war economy.

These data correct the negative historiographical judgment on the inability of Italian Jews to contribute to economic growth after 1710. It would be misleading to compare eighteenth-century Italian Jewish entrepreneurship to contemporaneous industrial developments in England or Germany. In fact, the slow pace of Jewish inland commerce was heavily influenced by the largely rural surrounding society.[16] Even noted

[14] Werther Angelini, *Gli ebrei di Ferrara nel Settecento. I Coen e altri mercanti nel rapporto con le pubbliche autorità* (Urbino, 1973); Viviana Bonazzoli, *Adriatico e Mediterraneo orientale. Una dinastia mercantile ebraica del secondo '600: i Costantini* (Trieste, 1998); Alberto Castaldini, *La segregazione apparente. Gli ebrei a Verona nell'età del ghetto (secoli XVI–XVIII)* (Florence, 2008); Federica Francesconi, "Jewish Families in Modena from the Renaissance to the Napoleonic Emancipation (1600–1810)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Haifa, 2007); Simonsohn, *Duchy of Mantua*, 309.

[15] Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, "Gli ebrei nel Veneto durante il Settecento," in Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi, eds., *Storia della cultura veneta. Il Settecento*, vol. 5/II (Vicenza, 1986), 459–86, esp. 461–3; Milano, *Storia degli ebrei*, 295.

[16] Angelini, *Ebrei di Ferrara*, 199.

Sephardic trading firms remained small, mostly individual businesses, unable to develop into larger productive enterprises.[17] However, by the end of the eighteenth century, 80–85 percent of the Italian population was still composed of peasants, who frequently did not own their land and lived in near-indigence. Petty and high aristocrats, lower and higher clergy, and a small, heterogeneous "bourgeoisie" (which included artisans, petty traders, doctors, lawyers, and civil servants) made up the rest of the Christian population. Considering this context, it becomes evident that the economic specialization of most Italian Jews in trade and manufacture allowed them to play the role of an otherwise largely absent "urban middle class."[18]

Finally, the second half of the eighteenth century saw an increasing Jewish involvement in agriculture. Whereas Jews in the German lands and eastern Europe were prevented from owning land, in several Italian regions – in the countryside around Mantua, Modena, Reggio, Parma, and Livorno – Jews had found ways to enter the sphere of agriculture, often paying to receive special licenses and dispensations.[19] This trend accelerated during the Napoleonic period, in the wake of the nationalization and requisition of ecclesiastical goods. After 1800, Italian Jews found themselves free to invest the profits of their trading and manufacturing businesses in agrarian property. The Italian Jewish elite accumulated large territories in the Po valley.[20] Although contemporary critics associated the ownership of landed estates with lack of productivity and often contrasted it with "modern" industrial manufacture, access to land is yet another reflection of the Jewish elite's efforts at economic normalization and equality with their non-Jewish peers.[21]

Alongside the small Jewish mercantile class, and the large number of Jews who earned their living as pettier merchants and craftsmen, poverty increased considerably in all Jewish centers in the course of the eighteenth century. This phenomenon was particularly evident in the two largest Italian communities, in Livorno and Rome, consisting of approximately 4,500 and 3,000 souls, respectively, by 1800. Yet no center was immune from the presence of mendicants, vagrants, poor widows, orphans, and single mothers – social emergencies that the Jewish community leaders

[17] Bonazzoli, *Adriatico e Mediterraneo orientale*, 191–5.

[18] Roberto G. Salvadori, *1799. Gli ebrei italiani nella bufera antigiacobina* (Florence, 1999), 18–37.

[19] Simona Mori, "Lo Stato e gli ebrei mantovani nell'età delle riforme," in Paolo Alatri and Silvia Grassi, eds., *La questione ebraica dall'Illuminismo all'Impero (1700–1815)* (Naples, 1994), 209–34, esp. 211.

[20] Angelini, *Ebrei di Ferrara*, 312; Francesconi, *Jewish Families in Modena*, 246–7, 258.

[21] Angelini, *Ebrei di Ferrara*, 302–3.

faced with measures ranging from harsh policing to financial assistance. Growing destitution was not limited to Italian Jews, but was a burning social issue all over western and central Europe. Still, the process of pauperization that affected Italian Jewish communities during the eighteenth century needs to be examined in the specific context that characterized Jewish life in Italy from the mid sixteenth century: the ghetto.

JEWISH SOCIETY IN THE GHETTOS

By the mid seventeenth century, the ghetto system was firmly in place in several Italian states, although, remarkably, a number of small urban centers in Piedmont and the Po valley did not establish ghettos until well into the eighteenth century, at the same time as reformist administrations were increasingly questioning legal restrictions over Jewish residence and economic opportunities. Regardless of the intentions lying behind the creation of segregated Jewish enclosures, Jews and Christians continued to interact socially and intellectually, and their economic exchanges did not cease. The ghettos did not lead to mass conversions either, as originally hoped for by those Catholic reformers who envisioned them as urban barriers to strengthen Christian unity by segregating unbelievers.[22] This notwithstanding, ghettoization profoundly shaped early modern Jewish life in Italy, not only because of the serious limitations it imposed, but also because of the specific survival strategies developed by Italian Jews to cope and, at least in certain instances, thrive in the ghettos.

Despite initial legislation to the contrary, Jewish community leaders frequently succeeded in negotiating central and commercially viable locations for the Italian ghettos, which provided a greater number of "public services" than any other urban area of the time, catering to the cultural and ritual needs of the community, as well as its welfare. This concentration required increasingly elaborate infrastructures for services, such as drinking water, garbage disposal, and the creation of ritual baths.[23] No two ghettos were alike, but most of them were unable to meet the augmented infrastructural burden and became plagued with scarce hygiene and overcrowding. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century descriptions of the Roman ghetto dwell on its filth, stagnant air, and above all on the miserable living conditions of Roman Jews. An average family of three to six people survived in a single room, men and women forced into uncomfortable proximity. A common architectural solution to the problem of overcrowding was the

[22] Kenneth Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy, 1555–1593* (New York, 1977).

[23] Donatella Calabi, "The Jews and the City in the Mediterranean Area," in Alexander Cowan, ed., *Mediterranean Urban Culture, 1400–1700* (Exeter, 2000), 56–68, esp. 68.

construction of additional floors built over formerly one- or two-storey houses, a phenomenon evident in what remains of Mantua's and Venice's ghettos. Sanitary conditions were problematic in larger ghettos. Hygiene and living conditions were more acceptable in smaller, less crammed ghettos, such as in Modena, Reggio, Verona, Florence, or Padua.[24]

Early Jewish adoption of forms of "demographic rationalization" may be viewed as a reaction to overcrowding in the Italian ghettos and increasing pauperization from 1650 on. The Jews in Italy were about 20,700 at the beginning of the seventeenth century, in a global Italian population of 13,500,000. By 1700, their number had grown to 0.2 percent of the entire population (26,800 out of 13,600,000). The eighteenth century, conversely, marked a demographic decline in most Jewish communities, with the important exception of Livorno, while the general Italian population grew steadily. By 1800, Jews accounted for 0.19 percent of the total population on the peninsula (34,300 out of 18,300,000).[25]

Various factors explain the reduced birth rate among ghettoized Italian Jews. Nuptial frequency decreased, while the average age at marriage increased among poorer men and women, who were unable to secure proper dowries until well into their twenties. Above all, Italian Jews were early adopters of forms of contraception to control family growth. Because of the decline in births and the ensuing diminution of young people, Italian Jewish society started growing older – and stayed so for longer. Despite their often-dejected living conditions, heightened attention to food cleanliness, networks of Jewish benevolent societies in charge of the sick and the poor, and the presence of highly trained physicians in the ghettos account for a reduction of mortality rates among Italian Jews.[26] Jews can thus be compared to other small layers of the Italian population, such as urban aristocracy, who took up similar behaviors resulting in reduced birth and mortality rates, anticipating demographic trends that became common among the general Italian population only at the end of the nineteenth century.

The enforcement of ghettos in Italian cities also enhanced systems of self-government. Jewish communal institutions in Italy had long preceded the establishment of the ghetto and should not be seen as a direct result of forced enclosure.[27] Likewise, a highly structured community such as that in Livorno was never officially segregated. Yet frequent urban reorganizations planned by the city authorities, accompanying the establishment of the

[24] Milano, *Storia degli ebrei*, 532–4; Simonsohn, *Duchy of Mantua*, 527–8.
[25] Della Pergola, "Popolazione ebraica," 903–5. [26] Ibid., 918–20.
[27] For a different interpretation, see Stefanie Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence: The Construction of an Early Modern Jewish Community* (Stanford, 2005).

ghettos; the concentration of high numbers of Jews coming from smaller rural centers into a single urban enclosure; and the official sanction paradoxically offered by the ghetto to permanent Jewish presence in Italy – all encouraged Jewish institution building.[28]

By 1650, all Italian Jewish communities had developed oligarchic systems of self-administration, firmly in the hands of families of merchants and bankers. Despite the widening gap between rich and poor within the ghetto, there seems to have been no overt opposition to the authority of these Jewish "aristocrats" or clear instances of class friction until the late eighteenth century.[29] Administration consisted of a variety of arrangements. The system normally included two boards: the larger one might comprise 60 members, as in Rome (and in the ghetto-free port of Livorno), 23 as in Padua, or up to 100, as in Mantua. From among their numbers, the "governors" appointed a smaller board, which elected three to five *parnasim* ("lay leaders") and other communal officials. Ancient power struggles between the various ethnic components of a community were reflected in communal arrangements that allocated a fixed number of seats to Jews of Italian, Ashkenazic, or Sephardic origin, in cities such as Rome, Mantua, and Venice.[30]

Most communities, with the exceptions of Rome, Ancona, and Venice, also maintained autonomous jurisdiction over Jewish civil cases, which required the use of Halakhah, and over commercial cases between Jews, usually adjudicated by lay arbiters according to local laws and *ius commune*. In the case of criminal offenses and of cases between Jews and Christians, other tribunals – either civil or ecclesiastical – were responsible.[31] Increasingly in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though, Italian Jewish men and women brought their civil grievances in front of state tribunals, to the chagrin of communal leaders. It should be noted that, at least in theory, Jews were only subject to the jurisdiction of lay civil courts, since they did not belong to the "body of the Church" and did not fall under the authority of canon law. However, whenever a Jew was accused of committing blasphemy or a crime "against the [Catholic] faith," ecclesiastical judges could claim competence over the case. Conflicts of interest regarding jurisdictional authority over the Jews were common between lay and ecclesiastical tribunals, as well as within diverse ecclesiastical institutions (i.e., the Papal Inquisition as opposed to local bishops).[32]

[28] Israel, *European Jewry*, 160. [29] Ibid., 165. [30] Milano, *Storia degli ebrei*, 465–6.

[31] In Livorno, minor criminal offenses involving Jewish parties might be adjudicated by the *parnasim*.

[32] Luciano Allegra, *Identità in bilico. Il ghetto ebraico di Torino nel Settecento* (Turin, 1996); Marina Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati. Storie di ebrei, cristiani e convertiti nella Roma dei Papi* (Rome, 2004), 14–19.

Conflicting claims regarding jurisdictional authority over Jewish subjects often permitted spaces of action and negotiation to the Italian Jewish communities.

Contrary to those who argue that the highly organized Jewish communities of Italy were "extra-territorial institutions,"[33] they should be regarded as well-integrated organs within the state machinery. Although corporate existence was legally forbidden to Jews, *de facto* Jewish communities still functioned like recognized corporate bodies with special privileges and distinctive restrictions. Such a model formed an integral part of the state articulation during the early modern period and was not limited to Jewish communities. In the juridically unequal society of the Old Regime, this included any organized collectivity, such as professional associations. State officials relied on the Jewish leaders primarily for tax purposes; with little exception, all Italian Jewish communities had to pay heavy taxes to their prince's treasury, and occasional, equally hefty, "voluntary donations." Moreover, Jewish supervision over the smooth running of the ghetto lightened the burden already weighing on state administrators. For similar reasons, the community's judicial responsibility over its members also met with widespread state approval until the late eighteenth century, when some jurists and civil servants began to demand that the Jews abide by the same laws as any other inhabitant of the state.

Parnasim have been traditionally portrayed as cautious vis-à-vis contacts with non-Jewish authorities, out of preoccupation with internal autonomy and in fear of capricious reactions from the state. In reality, Italian Jewish leaders engaged in a dynamic relationship with local and central authorities, both lay and ecclesiastical. Throughout the early modern period, Italian *parnasim* maintained an excellent grasp of policies, norms, and juridical precedents relevant to the Jewish status, and relied on Christian lawyers and notaries to pursue their goals. The Jewish elite's tendency to regard themselves as active interlocutors of the state only intensified in the course of the eighteenth century.

Jewish and lay or ecclesiastical authorities, including the Holy Office, could also collaborate to maintain order and stability, both within Jewish society and in regard to Jewish–Christian relations. Furthermore, individual members of Jewish communities did not hesitate to involve state or ecclesiastical authorities for personal reasons, in order to settle quarrels, submit pleas, obtain economic privileges, or (not infrequently) complain against decisions taken by the Jewish leaders themselves. The extent and intensity of Jewish negotiating activities should be emphasized. The bargaining power of each community often relied on its relative economic

[33] Milano, *Storia degli ebrei*, 460.

strength. Yet even in the impoverished ghetto of Rome, the community leaders were able to negotiate with the state, making use of a wide range of political and legal tools available to them.[34]

Relief for the poor was another of the pre-eminent concerns of Jewish governing boards, which devoted a large part of the funds raised through internal taxation to this effort. The practical and financial help of charitable societies considerably aided them in this task. The number of benevolent societies catering to the needs of the Jewish poor and the sick increased in relation to growing pauperization within the ghettos after 1650. Large communities had dozens of them. Burial and dowry societies were among the most ancient confraternities, together with the *bikkur ḥolim* societies, whose members visited and comforted the sick and the dying.[35]

Besides their social role, Jewish confraternities provided a unique outlet for religious devotion within the ghettos. From the second half of the seventeenth century, devotional practices connected to the activities of charitable associations reflected profound transformations within Italian Jewish society. For one thing, Jewish religious sensibilities became gradually more austere. Clearer borders were drawn between the realms of the sacred and the profane, similarly to contemporary trends in Baroque Catholic religiosity. Rabbis increasingly attempted to root out ancient popular, profane rituals, such as drunken revelries or dances on the eve of a child's circumcision, by "sacralizing" them. Though these efforts were only partially successful, rabbinic attempts at repressing Jewish popular customs affected female devotion, circumscribing female religiosity to prescribed activities, at the same time as new, entirely male devotional rituals were devised.[36] Late seventeenth-century ghettos witnessed an explosion of congregations established by lay educated men, which added a further layer of devotional requirements to what had been already established by local rabbis. The heightened sense of devotion promoted by pious congregations was often rooted in kabbalistic practices, such as the

[34] Silvia Grassi, "Gli ebrei a Roma nei primi decenni del Settecento," in Alatri and Grassi, eds., *Questione ebraica*, 161–81, esp. 179–80.

[35] Bracha Rivlin, *Mutual Responsibility in the Italian Ghetto: Benevolent Confraternities, 1516–1789* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1991); Israel, *European Jewry*, 166–7.

[36] Elliott Horowitz, "The Eve of the Circumcision: A Chapter in the History of Jewish Nightlife," in David Ruderman, ed., *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (New York, 1992), 554–88. On a female confraternity, see, however, Federica Francesconi, "Confraternal Community as a Vehicle for Jewish Female Agency in Eighteenth-Century Italy," in Nicholas Terpstra, Adriano Prosperi, and Stefania Pastore, eds., *Faith's Boundaries: Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities* (Turnhout, 2012), 251–76.

widespread *tikkun hatzot*, a nocturnal vigil devoted to mourning the destruction of the Temple, which took place before Jewish holidays.[37]

Life in the ghettos had notable repercussions also on laws and customs that developed as a result of forced enclosure. The so-called *gius gazagà* (or *ius cazagà*, from the talmudic Hebrew *ḥazakah*, meaning juridical possession) was a legal institution derived from the early papal decision to block rent prices *ad perpetuum* in the Roman ghetto and to forbid Christian landlords from evicting their Jewish tenants. Because of the *gazagà*, which rapidly spread throughout Italy, Jews started treating tenancies as if they had property rights over them – selling, donating, giving up, and inheriting them.[38] Yet another transformation in certain centers, such as Turin, was the development of a specifically Jewish system of devolution based on the dowry, favoring female heirs to the detriment of male relatives. Since dowry money by its nature was legally unavailable to creditors, by the eighteenth century dowries had turned into a financial instrument that helped safeguard capital from debt, creditors, or a relative's conversion to Christianity, while adding to a family's contractual power. This system enabled lasting wealth protection and prevented financial traumas in the highly uncertain conditions of the ghetto.[39] In Turin, as well as in the ghetto-free port of Livorno, moreover, the dowry's importance enhanced Jewish female authority, strengthening women's ability to determine their own economic conditions as well as that of their families.[40]

INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

Despite their small number, the Jews of Italy participated fully in the intellectual and spiritual upheavals experienced by European Jewish society in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, contributing to the cultural developments of the time in crucial respects. During this period, technological innovations ranging from cheaper means of communication

[37] Robert Bonfil, "Change in the Cultural Patterns of a Jewish Society in Crisis: Italian Jewry at the Close of the Sixteenth Century," in Ruderman, ed., *Essential Papers*, 401–25, esp. 419.

[38] Vittore Colorni, *Gli ebrei nel sistema del diritto comune fino alla prima emancipazione* (Milan, 1956), 60–5.

[39] Luciano Allegra, "A Model of Jewish Devolution: Turin in the Eighteenth Century," *Jewish History* 7 (1993), 29–58.

[40] Allegra, "Jewish Devolution"; Cristina Galasso, *Alle origini di una comunità. Ebree ed ebrei a Livorno nel Seicento* (Florence, 2002). For contrasting evidence from Modena, see Federica Francesconi, "Jewish Women in Eighteenth-Century Modena: Individual, Household, and Collective Properties," in Jutta Gisela Sperling and Shona Kelly Wray, eds., *Across the Religious Divide: Women, Property and Law in the Wider Mediterranean (ca. 1300–1800)* (New York, 2010), 191–207.

to better roads, which eased access to information, facilitated greater intellectual exchanges both between Italian Jews and non-Jews and among distant Jewish communities. Thus, from the second half of the seventeenth century on, Italian rabbis intensified their dialog with Jewish authorities throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Levant. Similarly, intellectual exchanges between Jews and non-Jews increased, though the dialog was often far from balanced or equal.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Sabbatean movement profoundly affected the Jews of Italy, and it continued to do so well after the failed messiah's conversion in September 1666, provoking deep fractures within the Jewish scholarly and kabbalistic world up to the 1730s. The diffusion of Kabbalah among Italian Jewish scholars surely prepared the ground for both the spread of Sabbateanism and its later clandestine survival in the Italian peninsula. Kabbalistic circles strengthened particularly in the area of Mantua, where Rabbi Moses Zacuto (1625–97) had established a flourishing school: among his pupils were scholars who distinguished themselves both as crypto- and as anti-Sabbateans in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

In 1666, in the aftermath of Nathan of Gaza's revelation of Sabbatai's messiahship, Mantua, Venice, and Livorno, another hub of kabbalistic studies, became centers for the dissemination of Sabbatean information. Thanks to its geographical location, Italy served as a crucial center of diffusion of Nathan's thought even after the initial messianic fervor subsided in the wake of Sabbatai's apostasy, as the movement transformed into an underground heresy. Those Sabbateans who did not apostatize to Islam in Salonika and instead fled from the Balkans transmitted Nathan's legacy to Italy. From Italy, these concepts spread to Poland–Lithuania, Smyrna, and the Holy Land.[41]

The Jewish establishment reasserted its authority relatively quickly after news of the messiah's conversion to Islam reached Italy. Unity and calm were restored – at least on the surface. Still, it appears that faith in Sabbatean beliefs survived clandestinely among Italian Jews for decades. Influential crypto-Sabbatean kabbalists such as the Livornese Moses Pinheiro and two of Moses Zacuto's pupils – Abraham Rovigo (*c.* 1650–1713), respected head of a *yeshiva* in Modena, and Benjamin Cohen Vitale, rabbi of Reggio (1651–1730) – never embraced the heretical antinomian streak that characterized the teachings of Abraham Cardoso. Rather, Italian crypto-Sabbateanism was characterized by extreme, ascetic pietistic

[41] Simonsohn, *Duchy of Mantua*, 562–4; Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, 1976), 469; Meir Benayahu, *The Shabbatean Movement in Greece* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1971–7).

practices, pursued in the hope of achieving divine illuminations and prophetic visions.[42]

The Italian rabbinate suffered a loss of prestige in the wake of the Sabbatean fiasco and was largely on the defensive against threats to its safety and authority, coming from both inside and outside the Jewish fold. Against the resurgence of crypto-Sabbatean belief spread by the controversial Neḥemiah Ḥayon (1713–14), kabbalists such as Joseph Ergas (1685–1730) of Livorno embarked on a mission to popularize anti-Sabbatean kabbalistic thought. The international polemic orchestrated by the anti-Sabbatean zealot, Moses Ḥagiz, which erupted in 1729 and 1735 around the Paduan scholar Moses Ḥayim Luzzatto (1707–46), highlight the suspicion of most Italian rabbis vis-à-vis any alleged kabbalistic deviance. The talented and highly educated Luzzatto claimed to be visited by a divine messenger (*magid*) and believed himself to be his generation's Moses. Whereas Luzzatto never actually entertained Sabbatean beliefs, the young man's claims to divine illumination and his beliefs in Jewish spiritual renewal were largely perceived as a threat by the rabbinic establishment.[43] Despite the support of respected Jewish authorities, Luzzatto was forced to stop publicizing his views in 1730 and eventually left for Amsterdam in 1735.

At the same time as the Italian rabbinate found itself caught up in the Luzzatto affair, new currents of rationalism entered both Jewish rabbinic and lay culture. Customarily, Torah studies informed organically the pursuit of general culture among Italian Jews, while familiarity with non-Jewish culture was considered not only normal but something required of the intellectual elite.[44] Some eighteenth-century Italian Jews were therefore not oblivious to Enlightenment thought, from which they appropriated elements, including encyclopaedism, an appreciation for moral and civic education, an opening to scholarly and philological criticism, and faith in human progress. Jewish scholars were cognizant of contemporaneous philosophical, scientific, and literary tendencies flourishing not only in Italy, but also in France, Holland, and England. The Jewish intellectual elite in Italy responded creatively to such novel cultural challenges,

[42] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 890–2; Isaiah Tishby, "R. Meir Rofe's Letters of 1675–80 to R. Abraham Rovigo" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 3–4 (1960), 71–130; Isaiah Sonne, "Visitors at the House of R. Abraham Rovigo" [Hebrew], *Sefunot* 5 (1961), 275–96.

[43] Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatean Controversies* (New York, 1990), 195–230.

[44] Lois C. Dubin, "Trieste and Berlin: The Italian Role in the Cultural Politics of the Haskalah," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987), 189–224, esp. 197–9, 211.

embracing current scholarly vocabularies yet keeping an unflinching commitment to Jewish traditions.[45]

The highest example of Jewish encyclopaedism in Italy was the *Paḥad Yitzhak* by rabbi and physician Isaac Lampronti (1679–1756) of Ferrara, a "ritual dictionary in the Hebrew language" arranged alphabetically in 120 volumes. Only 2 volumes were printed during the author's lifetime (1750 and 1753, Venice). Yet Lampronti's contemporaries appreciated the novelty of the genre and its filiation from the sort of eighteenth-century encyclopaedism made famous by Diderot and d'Alembert.[46] Lampronti's reorganization of halakhic knowledge has been compared to the products of contemporary scientific academies. His *yeshiva* adhered to scholarly methods common in existing institutions of higher secular learning, and Lampronti himself operated at the center of a vast network of collaborators and correspondents.[47] The *Paḥad Yitzhak* not only testifies to the creativity of Italian eighteenth-century rabbinic tradition, it also points to the role of intellectuals educated in both rabbinics and medicine in shaping Italian Jewish culture.

From the fifteenth century, Jews had been allowed to enroll at selected Italian universities in order to study medicine (law and theology were forbidden to Jewish students until emancipation). Between 1617 and 1816, approximately 320 Jewish students graduated from the University of Padua, where they had been exposed to study of the liberal arts, Latin, and classical medical texts, alongside more current developments in the natural sciences, anatomy, chemistry, and applied medicine. University training provided an institutional vehicle for the diffusion of lay and scientific culture among Jews before emancipation. Because of concerns regarding the opportunities for interethnic and inter-religious exchange that university life afforded, Jewish preparatory schools emerged where pupils supplemented pre-medical studies with a healthy dose of Jewish learning. Indeed, rabbinic ordination was often combined with university medical studies.[48]

The role of university-trained Jewish physicians in Italy was not limited to the practice of medicine within their own communities and at times among Christians, such as in the Venetian Republic or Tuscany. Perhaps

[45] Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, 1999); Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford, 2014).

[46] David J. Malkiel, "The Burden of the Past in the Eighteenth Century: Authority, Custom and Innovation in the 'Pahad Yitzhaq,'" *Jewish Law Annual* 16 (2006), 93–132.

[47] David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven, 1995), 256–9; David Malkiel, "Law and Architecture: The Pollution Crisis in the Italian Ghetto," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 4 (2011), 255–84.

[48] Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery*, 100–17.

more importantly, university-trained physicians perceived themselves as the true intellectual elite of Italian Jewry. Italian Jewish culture was permeated by an ideal personified by the "rabbi-poet-doctor," in Meir Benayahu's definition: scholars such as Lampronti, Samson Morpurgo, or Shabbetai Marini were praised for their halakhic expertise, their skills in modern science and medicine, and their ease with both Hebrew and Italian literature.[49] In the second half of the eighteenth century, physicians – proud of the medical achievements of the "Jewish nation" and ideally equipped to bridge Jewish with Italian and European culture – also stood at the forefront of movements toward Jewish integration and equality.[50]

In the 1760s and 1770s, furthermore, scholars concentrated their attention on reforms to Jewish education. Evidence from the middle of the eighteenth century shows that in northern and central Italian communities, such as Verona, Mantua, and Livorno, the curricula differed only in a few details from those customary outside Italy.[51] Although the Church repeatedly banned the Talmud, Italian Jews were able to access its legal materials with the help of permitted codes such as Isaac Alfasi's *Sefer Halakhah*, and halakhic study and practical expertise did not decline. In fact, in keeping with broader European trends, the study of legal commentaries and talmudic codes had gained terrain by 1750, although general studies, such as Italian and arithmetic, as well as the Hebrew Bible, were also taught in the Italian Talmud Torah (the Jewish public school). The Venetian rabbis Jacob Saraval (1708–82) and Simone Calimani (1699–1784) attempted to change this trend by focusing on ethics and education in the Italian language.

Both Saraval and Calimani pursued a kind of Jewish education more open to the requirements of the changing times. Saraval, spiritual leader of the Mantuan community from 1752, established a new *yeshiva* around 1769. In his emphasis on the necessity to teach the fundamentals of Judaism in Italian and his stress on moral and civic issues alongside traditional Jewish studies, Saraval appears to have anticipated the pedagogical reforms introduced by Joseph II in 1782.[52] At the same time, aware of French Enlightenment thought, Saraval defended Italian Jewish customs

[49] Meir Benayahu, "Rabbi Abraham Cohen of Zante and the Padua Group of Doctors-Poets" [Hebrew], *Hasifrut* 7 (1978), 108–40.

[50] Lois Dubin, "Medicine as Enlightenment Cure: Benedetto Frizzi, Physician to Eighteenth-century Italian Jewish Society," *Jewish History* 26 (2012), 201–21; Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 96–126.

[51] Simonsohn, *Duchy of Mantua*, 598; Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, "Fervore di educazione ebraica nelle Comunità venete del '700," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 34 (1968), 582–91; Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 103–5.

[52] Asher Salah, *Samuele Romanelli, Visioni d'Oriente. Itinerari di un ebreo italiano nel Marocco del Settecento* (Florence, 2007), 12–13.

against the attacks on the Jewish oath by the lawyer Giovanni Battista Benedetti of Ferrara, an admirer of Voltaire.[53] Saraval is also known for translating the libretto of Handel's oratorio *Esther* from English into Hebrew. Although his free verse translation was pioneering at the time, he shared a love for Hebrew verse, opera, and theatre with contemporary educated Jews: musical and literary academies provided common forms of entertainment and edification in the Italian ghettos.

Calimani's pedagogical leanings were similar to those of Saraval, with whom he had published an Italian version of *Pirke 'Avot* in 1729. In 1751, he translated into Italian a Hebrew grammar that he had composed twelve years earlier. Calimani's *Esame o sia catechismo ad un giovane israelita istruito nella sua religione* (Gorizia, 1783), inspired by the same opening to Italian culture as his earlier works, soon became the most widespread textbook in late eighteenth-century Italian Jewish schools. In the same spirit, Calimani supported the maskil Naphtali Herz Wessely's efforts to promote educational reforms among Ashkenazic Jews.[54]

By the second half of the eighteenth century, Italian Jews did not simply absorb or appropriate Enlightenment culture: they actively promoted its diffusion. The Jewish merchant Mosè Beniamino Foa from Reggio Emilia, who catered to a public of aristocratic and highly educated buyers, started importing key Enlightenment works in 1761 and was instrumental in diffusing them to urban centers in northern Italy. By 1788, Foa's catalogue offered a list of 5,500 titles selected from France, Holland, England, and the Flanders, including classic seventeenth-century philosophical and scientific texts, examples of French Enlightenment thought, and authors prohibited elsewhere in Italy, such as Rousseau.[55]

In sum, by the 1780s, Jews stemming from as widely different realities as Prussia and the Ottoman Empire saw Italian Jewry as particularly integrated within its surrounding society, while being able to maintain a strong attachment to Jewish traditions and learning. A similar perception was shared by many privileged Italian Jews, who looked at their less fortunate foreign brethren with a mix of benevolence and patronizing superiority.[56]

[53] Paolo Bernardini, *La sfida dell'uguaglianza. Gli ebrei a Mantova nell'età della rivoluzione francese* (Rome, 1996), 90–5.

[54] Dubin, *Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*, 124–33; Ioly Zorattini, "Ebrei nel Veneto," 483–4.

[55] Luigi Balsamo, "Gli ebrei nell'editoria in Italia nel '600 e '700," in *Italia Judaica* III, 49–65, esp. 60–3.

[56] Matthias B. Lehmann, "A Livornese 'Port Jew' and the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire," *Jewish Social Studies* 11 (2005): 51–76; Dubin, "Trieste and Berlin," 203–4; Salah, *Samuele Romanelli*.

THE CHURCH AND THE JEWS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

An overview of Jewish life in Italy would not be complete without considering the attitude of the Church toward the Jews, particularly those of Rome. The capital of Catholic Christianity hosted the oldest uninterrupted Jewish settlement in the peninsula, dating back to ancient Roman times. The symbolic presence of a large Jewish community within the very heart of Christianity (in the period under consideration, Roman Jewry fluctuated from 4,000 down to 3,000 souls) was accompanied by a harsh regimen of restrictions. It was in Rome that specific legislation pertaining to the Jewish condition, as well as concrete policies targeting the Jews, were first developed and applied.

Scholars disagree about the significance of the eighteenth century in the history of papal Jewry policy.[57] It seems safe to say, following Kenneth Stow, that the period did not constitute a radical turning point. Repressive eighteenth-century papal policies toward the Jews were rooted in centuries of canon law discussions and precedents. The periodic reformulation of Church regulations concerning the Jews depended also on wider political and religious concerns relative both to internal developments – such as the pressure of reformist groups within the Church – and to external demands – such as individual Italian states' policies. Aggressive policies and authoritarian reactions from the Church characterized moments of perceived menace to its ministry and power. A comparison can be drawn between the restrictive anti-Jewish measures that characterized the Church's reaction to the Protestant Reformation and those that characterized the late eighteenth century. Concomitant with the increased independence from the Church of a growing number of Italian rulers, the circulation of Jansenistic ideas, and the diffusion of secularism and Enlightenment culture, the papacy embraced measures leading to stronger conversionary efforts. At the same time, the blood libel was newly diffused through the propaganda of the rector of the Roman Casa dei Catecumeni ("House of Neophytes"), Francisco Rovira Bonet.[58]

[57] Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati*; Kenneth Stow, "*Favor et Odium Fidei*: Conversion *Invitis Parentibus* in Historical Perspective," *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà* 25 (2012), 55–86.

[58] The Casa dei Catecumeni in Rome was probably the most influential House of Neophytes, a Counter-Reformation institution established to facilitate Jewish conversion to Christianity. Mario Rosa, "La Santa Sede e gli ebrei nel Settecento," in Vivanti, ed., *Ebrei in Italia*, 1069–87; Marina Caffiero, "'Le insidie de' perfidi giudei.' Antiebraismo e riconquista cattolica alla fine del Settecento," in Alatri and Grassi, eds., *Questione ebraica*, 183–207, esp. 187–95; Stow, "*Favor et Odium Fidei*," 67.

Italian Jewry reacted at several levels against these threats. Mantuan scholars Judah Briel and Solomon Aviad Sar-Shalom Basilea were well known for their literary endeavors against Christian critics.[59] From the 1690s, the Roman Rabbi Tranquillo Vita Corcos (1660–1730) emerged as a vocal apologist for Italian Jewry, whose centers he defended with the help of erudite discussions of Jewish law, customs, and legal rights. Jewish communities in northern and central Italy, moreover, customarily appealed to the state authorities to block the publication of polemical texts attacking Judaism or to prohibit preachers from haranguing their followers with Judeophobic sermons. Still, the space to maneuver around restricting policies or fight against libels, and the rate of success of these endeavors, varied significantly depending on specific political contexts.

Despite ecclesiastic pressures, everyday relationships between Jews and Christians were not necessarily tense or polarized, but often amicable, at least on the surface.[60] Physical proximity between Jews and Christians seemed unavoidable in the early modern Italian town, in spite of ghettoization. Jewish and Christian men socialized in public urban spaces such as taverns and coffee houses, while women may have encountered each other within shared domestic spaces, like a building's courtyard. Degrees of intimacy, including sexual relations, were not unheard of among the lower classes, regardless of the vocal opposition of both Jewish and Christian authorities.[61] Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that for most Jews life expectations and activities were entirely defined by belonging to their community. Still, Jewish leaders viewed conversion to Christianity as a constant and serious threat to the fabric of Jewish society and actively fostered the careful preservation of clear lines of demarcation between communities.[62] It was precisely on conversionary efforts that Popes Benedict XIV (1740–58) and Pius VI (1775–99) concentrated.

Benedict XIV's legal innovations were aimed primarily at converting Jewish children and women – vital links in the transmission of Judaism. Based on a trove of earlier argumentations by canon jurists, he considered binding not only the conversions of minors who had been secretly baptized by devout neighbors or wet nurses, and kidnapped from their parents, but also the numerous cases of "oblations" of children and adults, "offered" to the Catholic faith against their will by relatives who had converted from

[59] Simonsohn, *Duchy of Mantua*, 639–40.

[60] David Malkiel, "The Jewish Christian Debate on the Eve of Modernity: Joshua Segre of Scandiano and his *Asham Talui*," *Revue des Études Juives* 164 (2005), 157–86.

[61] Marina Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi. Ebrei e cristiani tra eresia, libri proibiti e stregoneria* (Turin, 2012).

[62] David Malkiel, "Ebraismo, tradizione e società: Isacco Lampronti e l'identità ebraica nella Ferrara del XVIII secolo," *Zakhor* 8 (2005), 9–42, esp. 39–42.

Judaism. A similar validity was granted to Christian "denunciations" against Jewish men and women who were said to have privately manifested their will to convert. Such legal decisions curtailed the Jewish father's – or, in his absence, mother's – rights over their born or unborn children, affecting inheritance and marriage rights.[63]

"Houses" or "hospices" for the education of neophytes were present in all Italian states. In Rome itself, the center of Catholic proselytism, almost 2,000 Jewish men and women converted to Christianity between 1619 and 1797. Former Jews, particularly if they had high education or were of rabbinic extraction, might work as censors of Hebrew books, preach the mandatory Christian sermons that Jews were subjected to in most of early modern Italy, or become teachers of Hebrew and Jewish texts. In the few generations that divided Giulio Bartolocci (1613–87), author of the *Bibliotheca magna rabbinica* (Rome, 1675) from Giovanni Bernardo De Rossi (1742–1831), author of the *Dizionario storico degli autori ebrei e delle loro opere* (Parma, 1802), the study of Hebrew and other "Oriental languages" became more widely available as a university subject. Though Christian Hebraists were now able to rely solely on instruction by non-Jewish scholars, converts could still rise to academic prominence, as was the case of Paolo Sebastiano Medici, professor of Hebrew at the University of Florence. Not unlike many educated converts, Medici also emerged as a vociferous proponent of polemical arguments against Jews and Judaism. His *Riti e costumi degli ebrei confutati* (Florence, 1736), a belated reply to Leone Modena's *Historia dei riti ebraici*, quickly became one of the most quoted sources in later anti-Jewish propaganda. The role of converts, however, was not confined to the oppression of their former brethren. Converts acted as mediators in instances of both conflict and collaboration between the Jewish and the Christian communities, as exemplified by the powerful Ferrarese neophyte Fortunato Cervelli, supporter and promoter of Jewish business. Thus, although the overall number of conversions dropped in the course of the eighteenth century, the importance of both male and female neophytes as liminal figures, and their essential role as a link between Jewish and Christian societies, did not diminish.

While continuing on the conversionary path established by his predecessors, Pius VI also engaged in a direct confrontation with the perceived threat represented by the mounting forces of secularism and Enlightenment culture. In 1775, a jubilee year, he issued two separate yet related documents: first, an "Edict on the Jews" which once again prohibited the study of the Talmud, introduced a mandatory badge for Jews even within the ghetto precincts, and forbade any social contact between Jews and Christians, while

[63] Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati*, 112, 206; Stow, "*Favor et Odium Fidei*."

severely curtailing the already limited Jewish economic opportunities; and second, his well-known condemnation of all Enlightenment culture, the bull *Inscrutabile divinae sapientiae*. It was under Pius VI's pontificate that Jews came to be associated for the first time with Jacobins and Freemasons. This conceptual move led to the deterioration of Jewish conditions during the Restoration and to the development of nineteenth-century reactionary Catholicism.[64]

THE JEWISH QUESTION IN ITALY (1781–1791) AND THE LIMITS OF THE "FIRST EMANCIPATION" (1796–1799/1800–1814)

As Marina Caffiero has remarked, the historiographical polarity between 'old' and 'new' Italian states, devised by students of eighteenth-century Italian history, applies not only to their relative opening to reforms and state modernization in the Age of the Enlightenment, but also to their attitudes on "the Jewish question," particularly after 1770. 'Old' states such as the Kingdom of Savoy, the Republic of Venice, and the Papal States all increased restrictive legislation for their Jewish subjects, whereas limitations were gradually eased for Jews living in Tuscany, Modena, Parma and Piacenza, Mantua, and other Habsburg territories such as Trieste.[65]

In the Kingdom of Savoy, the *Costituzioni regie* ("Royal Decrees"), which had enforced the ghetto system throughout the state in 1723, were reiterated in 1770. In Venice, the harsh *Ricondotta* of 1777, inspired by the strict principles promoted by Pope Pius VI in 1775, forbade Jewish participation in any manufacturing activity. During the same years, reforms to Jewry policy, inspired by enlightened absolutist ideas and by the economic doctrines propounded by the science of administration known as cameralism, were introduced in Habsburg-ruled Italian regions, such as the Duchy of Mantua, Trieste, Gorizia and Gradisca, and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. In 1778, Grand Duke Peter Leopold allowed Jewish property-owners in Florence and Pisa to be elected to municipal councils. In 1779, Joseph II permitted Mantuan Jews to acquire real estate, eliminated the Inquisition, and included Jewish pupils in public schools. In Trieste, the ghetto was abolished in 1785, as an outcome of the Josephinian *Toleranzpatent* of 1782.

Still, the first years of administrative experimentation in the direction of Jewish civic integration and equality were defined by deep ambivalences on the part of Habsburg administrators and Jewish communal leaders alike.

[64] Caffiero, "Insidie," 194–207.

[65] Marina Caffiero, "Gli ebrei italiani dall'età dei Lumi agli anni della Rivoluzione," in Vivanti, ed., *Ebrei in Italia*, 1091–132, esp. 1091–2.

The civil servants attempted to rationalize the relationship between state and Jewish subjects by introducing legal and behavioral uniformity, in the attempt to curb the privileges of separate civic bodies. Nevertheless, they were willing to preserve elements of autonomous Jewish administration whenever they could ease the burden of state organization. For their part, the Jewish leaders welcomed new elements of economic, political, and social integration between Jews and non-Jews; yet they tended to resist the growing rate of state intervention curtailing their traditional authority over the community and Jewish privileges of autonomous jurisdiction. Undeniably, both the state functionaries and the representatives of the Jewish communities often proved unable to move beyond deeply ingrained Old Regime categories, behaviors, and privileges that stemmed from an understanding of the Jews as a "corporate nation" within the body of the state, rather than as individuals.[66] This notion, undermined during the French Revolution, endured in Italy well beyond 1789.

Contemporaneously to policy reorganization, works promoting an improvement of the Jewish condition, best contextualized within the wider European debate concerning Jewish "regeneration" in the 1780s, circulated in the burgeoning Italian public sphere. According to this line of reasoning, Jews were considered unready for full civic inclusion because of their long residence in the ghetto, their professional specialization, and their supposed particularism. Hence, they needed to transform their social, economic, and political behaviors to become individually worthy of productive participation in modern society. The only divergence among contemporary critics was over whether traditional restrictions and limitations should be lifted before or after Jewish regeneration.

A sizable public discussion concerning Jewish emancipation in Italy did not develop until the Risorgimento. However, some Italian civil servants, such as the Mantuan nobleman Giovan Battista Gherardo D'Arco, embraced reformist ideas concerning the improvement of the Jewish situation, aimed at enhancing their economic usefulness within the state. In his *Della influenza del ghetto nello stato* (Venice, 1782), a work that contains innovative and liberal concepts alongside elements of trite anti-Jewish propaganda, D'Arco claimed that the ghetto had prevented Jews from developing into a useful part of society, and hence it should be abolished. The journalist Giuseppe Compagnoni (1754–1833) composed a passionate attack on all restrictions imposed on the Jews and advocated their right to full emancipation, in his *Saggio sugli Ebrei e sui Greci* (Venice,

[66] Mori, "Stato e gli ebrei," 224–7, 233; Lois C. Dubin, "Subjects into Citizens: Jewish Autonomy and Inclusion in Early Modern Livorno and Trieste," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnows-Instituts* 5 (2006), 51–81; Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 218–38.

1792). Yet another line of argumentation concerning the granting of equal rights to Jews was pursued in Italy by some authors of Jansenistic tendencies, such as the Hebraist G. B. De Rossi or Giovanni Maria Pujati, who in his numerous writings published between 1778 and 1814 maintained that the Jews deserved love and respect, being a people blessed by God. Though their ultimate goal was clearly conversionary, these Catholic authors moved toward a more tolerant vision of Jewish–Christian relations.[67]

The Jewish enlightened avant-garde in Habsburg Italy, for its part, saluted the goal of Jewish civic and educational integration promoted by Joseph II's tolerance legislation. The leader of Gradisca Jewry, Elia Morpurgo, and the Mantuan physician Benedetto Frizzi (1756–1844) – one of the most vocal protagonists of the Italian Jewish Enlightenment – actively promoted Haskalah-inspired educational reforms. Morpurgo favored the establishment of normal schools for Jewish students and encouraged the prompt translation of Wessely's *Divre shalom ve-'emet* [Words of Peace and Truth] into Italian (Gorizia, 1783). In his apologetic *Difesa contro gli attacchi fatti alla nazione ebrea* (Pavia, 1784), Frizzi extolled Jewish economic contributions against D'Arco's critiques. Frizzi's later Hebrew work *Petaḥ 'Enayim* (Livorno, 1815–25) promoted the application of modern philosophical and scientific methods to traditional scholarship, discouraging the practice of casuistry for its own sake.[68]

If, in the Habsburg areas, the progress toward Jewish civic integration began in the 1780s, Jews in the rest of Italy experienced their first instance of political participation only with the arrival of the French revolutionary troops in 1796–9. As the French army marched down the Italian peninsula, ghettos and old restrictive legislations were abolished; however, full equal rights as citizens were extended only gradually to the Jews. Almost everywhere, individual Jews entered into municipal councils. The most famous appointees were Moisè Formiggini of Modena, perhaps the first Jew in Europe to participate in a legislative assembly in 1797, as a deputy in the newly formed Cispadana Republic; and Ezechia Morpurgo of Ancona, elected tribune in the Roman Republic in 1798.[69] Many others enrolled in the civic guard, pursuing a military experience from which they had been barred until that moment.

A certain historiographical tradition has depicted Italian Jews as enthusiastic Jacobins during the three years of French revolutionary rule. Indeed,

[67] Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'uguaglianza. Il dibattito sull'emancipazione degli ebrei in Italia (1781–1848)* (Milan, 1998), 40–52.

[68] Ibid., 134–8.

[69] Federica Francesconi, "From Ghetto to Emancipation: The Role of Moisè Formiggini," *Jewish History* 24 (2010), 331–54.

sectors of Italian Jewry not represented by the oligarchic establishment – above all the young and the poor – quickly appropriated a political vocabulary influenced by democratic ideas, with episodes of internal disturbance against the "despotic" Jewish leaders, such as the demonstrations against the *parnasim* in Ancona in 1785, in Livorno and Rome in 1796, in Modena, Ferrara, Mantua, and Venice in 1797.[70] The perceived Jewish sympathy for French rule and allegations of Jacobinism led to instances of severe anti-Jewish violence perpetrated by clergy-led peasant mobs during a series of religiously motivated anti-revolutionary episodes, the so-called Viva Maria riots that erupted in 1799. Jewish communities in central Italy were harshly hit: twenty-six Jews were burned alive in Senigallia and Siena; others were injured during the looting of the ghettos in Urbino, Pesaro, Lugo, Arezzo, Monte San Savino, and Pitigliano.[71]

Still, evidence of cautious and moderate attitudes can be found throughout the Italian communities. The established Jewish elite in Trieste, where Jews already enjoyed considerable privileges, maintained a marked pro-Habsburg attitude. Members of the Piedmontese communities showed only moderate appreciation for French innovations, reiterating their loyalty to the Kingdom of Savoy despite its conservatism in matters of Jewry policy. Although many communities celebrated the arrival of the French with ceremonies that included axing down and burning the gates of the ghetto and proclamations commemorating the enlightened French spirit, in a few centers, such as Reggio and Florence, Jews preferred to maintain the ghetto locks intact, fearing for their safety. The most outstanding instance of Jewish conservatism took place in Livorno, where the ruling oligarchy not only maintained a cautious approach toward the French occupiers, but remained highly skeptical of egalitarian and democratic ideas.

Overall, however, Italian Jews greeted favorably the new political, economic, and social prospects that French emancipation brought. The Jewish mercantile elite reaped the greatest benefits from the new situation, eagerly participating in political and economic experimentation during the fifteen years of Napoleonic rule. Jewish merchants in areas such as the Duchy of Modena and the Papal States were well equipped for such new opportunities, despite their long segregation in the ghettos. The merchants' experiences as negotiators and mediators on behalf of their communities, as well as their economic and social networks, which reached well beyond the ghettos, paved the way for their entry into the political sphere not only at the local, but also at the national,

[70] Caffiero, "Ebrei italiani," 1122–4.
[71] Salvadori, *Gli ebrei italiani nella bufera*, 71–110.

level.[72] A comparison with the pre-revolutionary period shows that, for the most part, Jewish political involvement was not a direct outcome of emancipation, but rather a development, in "democratic" garb, of older traditions of community leadership and negotiation matured within the ghetto system. Under French rule, moreover, relative newcomers who were able to emerge in the worlds of business and politics joined exponents of well-established mercantile families.

This process intensified after 1800, with the return of the Napoleonic army to Italy, the stabilization of democratic governments, and the creation of the Kingdom of Italy (1805), which unified Lombardy, the Venetian territories (under Habsburg rule between 1797 and 1805), the area of Trent, the Duchy of Modena, and part of the Papal States (Piedmont, Genoa, Parma, Tuscany, and Rome, conversely, became departments of the French Empire). The presence of Jewish notables in administrative bodies demonstrates the eagerness with which the elites, whose political energies had long been compressed by the ghetto system, were ready to engage in the government of the *res publica*. Such political fervor is also reflected in the common ambition to receive tokens of public recognition, such as prizes and decorations, a growing trend among Italian Jews in the nineteenth century.[73]

For the first time, the project of equality and codification pursued by the Napoleonic governments also demanded a public confrontation with the questions surrounding the polarized conception of the Jewish nation and individual, which was at the root of the "regeneration" discourse. In 1806, Napoleon summoned to Paris an assembly of 111 Jewish notables (of whom 28 were Italian), representing the approximately 90,000 Jews living in the French Empire and the Kingdom of Italy. The following year, the Emperor convened a revived "Grand Sanhedrin" (a rabbinic high court) composed of 71 representatives, to ratify the Assembly's decisions from a theological perspective. At both assemblies, Italian representatives mediated between radicals and traditionalists; their reputation as progressive leaders solidified among non-Italian Ashkenazic Jews.[74] The actual significance of Italian involvement emerged fully only in the aftermath of 1807, as some of the delegates, such as Moisè Formiggini, adapted the message of the Parisian Sanhedrin to specific Italian situations, guiding their constituencies in the transition to civic equality. The impact of the Napoleonic era on the

[72] Caffiero, "Ebrei italiani," 1120–1.

[73] Renzo de Felice, "Per una storia del problema ebraico in Italia alla fine del XVIII secolo e all'inizio del XIX. La prima emancipazione (1792–1814)," *Movimento operaio* 7 (1955), 681–727, esp. 718.

[74] Dubin, "Trieste and Berlin," 210.

religious sphere cannot be ignored either. Some of the leading rabbis who had taken part in the assemblies, such as the Mantuan Abraham Cologna (1755–1832), Elijah Aaron Lattes (d. 1839) from Turin, and the Venetian Jacob Emanuel Cracovia (1746–1820), successfully initiated a process of intellectual elaboration that would transform Italian Judaism in the course of the nineteenth century, touching primarily on the fields of Jewish education and liturgy.[75]

With the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the old political order in 1815, Italian Jewry was forced back to the juridical conditions that had preceded French-imposed emancipation. After the brief season of partial unification under the two political entities of the French Empire and the Kingdom of Italy, and the shared experience of emancipation, each Jewish community reverted to particular conditions that depended on each state's legislation. The old political, economic, and social restrictions were once again reinstated. The energizing experiences of the Jacobin triennium and the fifteen years of Napoleonic freedom, however, altered the Jewish condition in Italy irreversibly and were not to be easily forgotten. The processes begun during the revolutionary and Napoleonic period – economic expansion and diversification, brought about by the entry of Jews into agriculture, the liberal professions, and vocational careers; the first exhilarating experiences of political participation that had seen many Jews at the forefront of civic and national administration; the intellectual and religious re-elaboration that emancipation required of Italian Judaism, alongside the permanent undermining of Jewish autonomy and rabbinic authority – all of these trends germinated during the first half of the nineteenth century, creating the foundations for the entry of the Jews into Italian society that would be accomplished with the second emancipation of 1848–61.

While being mindful of the specific conditions experienced by Jews in different Italian states from 1650 to 1815, it is possible to offer a few general concluding observations. In the course of this period, the Jews of Italy solidified their ties to the states where they resided, at the same time as an increased political awareness and confidence developed within the precincts of the ghettos. Jews were able to take advantage of the interstices of competing political jurisdictions for utilitarian aims, both at the individual and at the communal levels. Such efforts were not always successful, but they demonstrated active engagement with the surrounding society, beyond widespread daily interactions with non-Jews. Economically, in the course of the eighteenth century large sectors of Italian Jewry grew into a sort of commercial and manufacturing "middle class" that stood out

[75] Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'uguaglianza*, 118–22.

in an otherwise agricultural context, contributing productively to the commercial and industrial development of northern and central Italy. On the other hand, increased pauperization radicalized the differences between the Jewish elite and the impoverished masses, particularly in the largest centers such as Livorno, Rome, and Mantua. The great presence of urban Jewish poor, often anchored to old superstitions and habits stigmatized by the Jewish elite itself, emerged as one of the fundamental issues that nineteenth-century Italian Jewry had to confront during its process of modernization.[76] Finally, Italian Jews were not oblivious to the broader intellectual discourse regarding progress and societal improvement that crystallized in the course of the eighteenth century. For many educated Jews, widespread aspirations to contribute to the common good of the larger society coexisted with untainted pride in and attachment to Jewish traditions. Only by paying attention to such formative political, socioeconomic, and intellectual experiences, matured within the ghettos from the late seventeenth century on, is it possible to fully appreciate the readiness of the Jews of Italy to confront the challenges of the first emancipation, and their eagerness to engage with modernizing Italian society in the nineteenth century.

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[76] Ibid., 124.

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CHAPTER 33

LOCALS
Jews in the Early Modern Dutch Republic

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BEYOND DECLINE AND FALL: REASSESSING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

By the end of the eighteenth century, the social and cultural position of the Jewish nation had become a much-debated topic in European discourse. Prominent intellectuals reflected on the place and role of the Jews in society, and politicians translated these reflections into concrete laws and policies. In 1781, Prussian civil servant Christian Konrad Wilhelm von Dohm put forward his plea *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, followed in 1788 by abbé Grégoire's revolutionary *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des juifs*. Together these treatises laid the foundations for the two main routes toward Jewish Emancipation: the moderate course as advocated by Dohm and pursued in the German and Habsburg lands, vis-à-vis the radical way forward proposed by Grégoire, which in 1791 led to the "instant emancipation" of the Jews of France.[1]

In 1770, two decades before Dohm and Grégoire published their thoughts on Jewish civic improvement, an article appeared in the innovative Dutch journal *De Koopman* [The Merchant] that seems to prefigure their ideas. It was written, under a pseudonym, by someone who introduced himself as "Mordechai van Aron de . . .," and contained virtually all arguments that would feature in later claims for Jewish Emancipation. Some have suggested that the famous philosopher Isaac de Pinto, or perhaps someone from his circle, was behind this plea for emancipation.[2] More probably, however, the Portuguese-Jewish Mordechai was a creation of the non-Jewish editor of *De Koopman*, Willem Ockers (1741–82), who followed the tradition of

[1] Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson, *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton, 1995), esp. 3–36.

[2] See, e.g., Jozeph Melkman (Michman), *David Franco Mendes: A Hebrew Poet* (Jerusalem, 1951), 134; Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, "Introduction to the Article on Jewish Emancipation by Mordechai van Aaron de . . . in the Dutch weekly De Koopman," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 30, 1 (1996), 190–4.

contemporary spectatorial journals in inventing a fictitious character to articulate an ambitious new project. On many issues *De Koopman* took a pragmatic stance, advocating anything that would revive the Dutch economy and positioning itself on the same political side as the Jews, i.e., within the conservative Orangist faction.[3] Given this orientation, Ockers's plea to have the Jews accepted as fellow-citizens was comparatively radical. Simultaneously, however, it does seem to fit into a broader, general picture of changing patterns between Jews and Christians in the eighteenth century, as we hope to demonstrate in this chapter.

The situation that had prompted "Mordechai" to broach the topic offers an accurate perspective on the state of the Jewish communities in the late eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. Due to the decline in international trade, the Sephardic community had become deeply impoverished; simultaneously, they lacked both the skills and the legal possibilities to join other professions. Mordechai adequately characterized the fate of the previous generation by summarizing that "they died rich, yet their offspring grew poor."[4] The Ashkenazic community, on the other hand, seemed to be headed in the opposite direction. Having arrived in the Republic broke and penniless, they had succeeded in building a viable community, which by 1770 greatly outnumbered its Sephardic counterpart.

Like many of his successors, Mordechai not only voiced an appeal to the Dutch authorities to embrace the Jews as equal citizens, but also added an urgent call for a full-scale cultural revolution *within* the Jewish community. In its final aim, the "Plan tot redres," which offered eighteen recommendations for improving the Jewish condition, reflects *De Koopman*'s overall pragmatic orientation: by obtaining equal rights, the Portuguese Jews would succeed in putting a halt to their monetary downfall and become good, *useful* members of Dutch society. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that this call for "regeneration" had also been inspired by more fundamental considerations. It relied heavily on Natural Law, which had "taught us to treat all human beings equally well,"[5] and on the "teachings of General Tolerance (*Algemeene Verdraagzaamheid*) which Europe now embraces. And I do dare ask," pseudo-Mordechai insisted, "whether we, who are living among Christians and with them constitute one body in every city, should not participate in equal privileges and liberties?"[6]

[3] Ton Jongenelen, "Mordechai. Illusie en werkelijkheid in het spectatoriale blad *De Koopman*," *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 26 (2003), 94–105.

[4] Mordechai van Aron de . . ., "Provisioneel plan, tot redres in de Polityke Huishouding, Negotie, en Middelen van bestaan der Hollandse Jooden, Ten einde hen nuttiger voor den Staat, voor het Algemeen, en voor den Koophandel te maaken," *De Koopman* 2, 54 (1770), 430.

[5] *De Koopman* 2, 55, 435. [6] Ibid., 436.

Mordechai's recommendations included admitting Jews to professions from which they had hitherto been barred; founding factories where Jews and Christians would collaborate and learn mutual tolerance; promoting a better knowledge of Dutch and French among the Jewish youth, combined with a revision of the traditional Jewish school system; and merging the Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities into one congregation without precedent. On top of that, Mordechai believed the Sabbath henceforth "could be comfortably kept on Sundays." On the pages of *De Koopman*, each of these suggestions was commented upon by Ockers-the-editor, who thus created a fictitious public dialog between a Christian *Amsterdammer* and his Jewish fellow-citizen. Though occasionally skeptical about the sweeping reform of Israelite mores as suggested by his Jewish *alter ego*, the Christian commentator generally agreed with his ideas for civic improvement. For who could deny, he summarized, that "good Jews would make far better citizens and patriots than bad Christians?"[7]

Subtly neglecting current realities, Ockers's "Plan tot redres" never received a follow-up, neither by the Christian authorities, nor by their Jewish subjects. It does, however, invite us to question an important, hitherto uncontested premise of modern Dutch-Jewish historiography: the vital impact of the 1796 Emancipation Decree on the history and identity of the *species judaica hollandia*. When contemplating *De Koopman*'s early integrationist agenda, and reading it in the light of, e.g., Isaac de Pinto's letters to Voltaire,[8] we cannot help but wonder whether "1796" truly was the socio-political watershed modern historians have claimed it to be. Did the ideal of civic equality indeed remain an uncongenial "imported commodity" from Enlightened France, as historians such as Jozeph Michman have not ceased to point out to us?[9] Or may we surmise that the 1796 decree did not constitute a dramatic caesura in the Dutch-Jewish timeline, and that its

[7] *De Koopman*, 2, 56, 443.

[8] Published in Dutch as *Brieven van eenige Portugeesche en Hoogduitsche Jooden aan den heer de Voltaire* (Amsterdam, 1770–87). On De Pinto and the general Enlightenment, see I. J. A. Nijenhuis, *Een joodse philosophe. Isaac de Pinto (1717–1787) en de ontwikkeling van de politieke economie in de Europese Verlichting* (Amsterdam, 1992); Adam Sutcliffe, "Can a Jew be a Philosophe? Isaac de Pinto, Voltaire, and Jewish Participation in the European Enlightenment," *Jewish Social Studies* 6, 3 (2000), 31–51; and Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, Ideas in Context 66 (Cambridge, 2003).

[9] Cf. especially the subtitle of Jozeph Michman's, *The History of Dutch Jewry During the Emancipation Period 1787–1815: Gothic Turrets on a Corinthian Building* (Amsterdam, 1995). The volume was co-inspired by his article "Gothische torens op een Corinthisch gebouw. De doorvoering der emancipatie der Joden in Nederland," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 89 (1976), 493–516, and the ensuing controversy with Anton Huussen Jr. in *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 94 (1979), 75–83; 96 (1981), 74–82.

events and consequences had been anticipated, or even prepared, by indigenous processes in eighteenth-century Dutch and Jewish society?

Dutch-Jewish historiography has always concentrated on two iconic epochs, each favouring its own religious-cultural sphere. On the one hand, there is the massive focus on the seventeenth century, the Golden Age of the Amsterdam Sephardim, the reconstruction and interpretation of which have been at the center of – most prominently – Yosef Kaplan's extensive oeuvre.[10] At the other end of the scale, much scholarly energy has been devoted to reconstructing – and judging – the processes of emancipation during the "Ashkenazic" nineteenth century, with due emphasis on the developments during the early, politically more adventurous, decades.[11] In Dutch, as well as in mainstream Jewish, historiography, the century in-between is generally treated (or dismissed) as an elusive non-period, as an age of economic decline and intellectual stagnation (Jonathan Israel),[12] as the uneventful aftermath of the previous multi-faith "knowledge explosion" (David Ruderman),[13] or as the gradual upbeat to a modern Jewish *Kulturkampf* in which new intellectual elites struggled to free themselves from traditional rabbinic authority, as Shmuel Feiner

[10] Two alternative interpretations of the Jewish identity of the Amsterdam Sephardim are offered by Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, 1997), and Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (Oxford, 2000). The religious and intellectual culture is thoroughly researched in Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden, 2000); Kaplan, *From New Christians to New Jews* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2003); and Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro* (Oxford, 2004). A predominantly economic interpretation is offered by Jonathan I. Israel, *Empires and Entrepots: The Dutch, the Spanish Monarchy and the Jews, 1585–1713* (London, 1990), and Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (Oxford, 1985).

[11] Michman, *The History of Dutch Jewry*; Jaap Meijer, *Erfenis der emancipatie. Het Nederlandse Jodendom in de eerste helft van de 19e eeuw* (Haarlem, 1963); Bart Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders. De integratie van de joden in Nederland 1814–1851* (Amsterdam, 2007); Salvador Bloemgarten, *Hartog de Hartog Lémon. Joodse revolutionair in Franse tijd* (Amsterdam, 2007); Irene Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment (almost) without Haskalah: The Dutch Example," *Jewish Culture and History* 13, 2–3 (2012), 220–34.

[12] See Israel, *European Jewry*; Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall (1477–1806)*, Oxford History of Early Modern Europe (Oxford, 1995); Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001). Echoes of Israel's appraisal are found in Jozeph Michman, Hartog Beem, and Dan Michman, *Pinkas: Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland* (Ede, 1992), 24, 34–5, 57–9; J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, and I. Schöffer, eds., *The History of the Jews in The Netherlands* (Oxford, 2002), 112–15.

[13] David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010).

suggests in his masterful reconstructions of the "revolutionary" eighteenth century.[14]

In this chapter, we propose to supplement and, to some extent, correct these dominant evaluations by giving center-stage to the Dutch eighteenth century, treating it neither as a continuation or prefiguration of other, more exciting epochs, nor as a period to be studied in splendid isolation. We intend to sketch the century as the *Sattelzeit* that it was – a hybrid, transitory period that demands to be addressed in its own terms. Indeed, our epoch seems to offer enough interfaces with Koselleck's well-known *Sattelzeit* hypothesis – which postulates a *Bedeutungswandel* ("shift in meaning") of various fundamental concepts in European society between 1750 and 1850 – for that to warrant tentative application.[15] During the period, Dutch Jewry too underwent a decisive demographical shift. It participated in new forms of consumption and communication and developed new modes of cultural expression, a number of which will be outlined below. Often voiced in the Yiddish vernacular, many of these expressions were explicitly aimed at new audiences and thus tied in with the processes of *Demokratisierung* that Koselleck identifies as a distinctive trait of the budding public sphere of the times.[16]

Another important element in Koselleck's conception of *Sattelzeit* is the increasing *Politisierung* of the European public sphere. Needless to say, the majority of eighteenth-century Dutch-Jewish authors were neither equipped nor inclined to formulate elaborate political ideologies. Writing in French, the philosophe Isaac de Pinto remains an early exception in the Jewish intellectual landscape. Yet we do find, across a wide range of sources that offer us a cross-section of the eighteenth-century Dutch-Jewish experience, an increasing awareness of *local* events, relations, and

[14] See especially Shmuel Feiner, "Ha-Haskalah ha-Muqdemet be-Yahadut ha-Me'ah ha-Shemoneh 'Esreh,'" *Tarbiz* 62, 2 (1998), 189–240; Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2004), esp. 21–84; Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, 2010).

[15] See Reinhart Koselleck's "Einleitung" to Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. I (Stuttgart, 1972), xiii–xxviii; and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2011), 102–9.

[16] See especially Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, "The Role of Yiddish in Early Dutch-Jewish Haskalah," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 36 (2003), 147–55; Avri Bar-Levav, "Amsterdam and the Inception of the Jewish Republic of Letters," in Yosef Kaplan, ed., *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History* (Leiden, 2008), 225–37; Shlomo Berger, "Yiddish on the Borderline of Modernity: Language and Literature in Early Modern Ashkenazi Culture," *Simon-Dubnow-Institut Jahrbuch/Yearbook* 6 (2007), 113–22; Bart Wallet, "Links in a Chain: Early Modern Yiddish Historiography from the Northern Netherlands 1743–1812" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2012).

responsibilities on the part of the Jewish residents – an awareness that resulted in a surprisingly early political positioning that deserves closer consideration within the context of other, learned and pedestrian, examples of the Jews' engagement with their Dutch milieu, and vice versa.

The following sections are built around such examples of affinity and connection. The resulting picture is that of a loosely threaded string of Jewish communities that were strongly rooted in, and shaped by, their immediate Dutch contexts – though not, we should add, in the deterministic sense that is implied by Sigmund Seeligmann's famous Darwinian label *species judaica hollandia*.[17] Jews in the Low Countries were "Dutch" in the sense in which the Jews of Georgian England were "Georgian,"[18] or the life of Ashkenazim in Poland and Lithuania differed from that of Ashkenazim in other parts of the Diaspora.[19] Having long since abandoned the Katzian paradigm of one European (read: German) Jewish road into modernity, our task is to assemble and assess this wealth of local facts and particularities, in terms of *transnational* patterns and indigenous deviations, of timing and degree. As for the latter, we hope to show that Dutch Jewry can be credited with a relatively high degree of early *Lokalisierung*, starting with the localization of religious processes in the seventeenth century[20] and followed by a growing *Politisierung* in the course of the next. Together, these factors may well account for the Jews' ready embrace of the Dutch nationality following the Emancipation decree of 1796, their early participation in Dutch national politics and in the general – only vaguely Christian – Enlightenment, and their rapid acculturation during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

[17] In "Die Juden in Holland. Eine Charakteristik," in J. Fischer and David Simonsen, eds., *Festskrift i Anledning af Prof. D. Simonsen's 70*-årige *Fødselsdag* (Copenhagen, 1923), 253–7.

[18] Cf. Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia, 1979). Cf. also David Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightement in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton, 2000).

[19] Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004); Hundert, "Redefining Modernity in Jewish History," in Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman, eds., *Rethinking European Jewish History* (London, 2008), 133–45.

[20] The famed Sephardic school-system, e.g., seems to have been inspired by Dutch educational ideas, notably by the 1625 regional *Schoolreglement* or "school order," which organized the Latin schools of Holland into six consecutive grades. Likewise, the introduction of competition and awards seems to have been copied from contemporary Dutch classroom practice; see Benjamin F. Fischer, "The Centering of the Bible in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: Jewish Religion, Culture and Scholarship" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2011), esp. 39–40.

IMMIGRATION AND "LOCALIZATION": THE JEWISH "NATIONS" BEFORE 1795

Any eighteenth-century visitor asking for the way to Amsterdam's Jewish quarter would have been pointed in the direction of the Deventer Houtmarkt. There, in the eastern precincts of the city, the synagogue-complexes of the Amsterdam Sephardim and Ashkenazim rose high above the surrounding canals and terraces. The area was a standard destination for aristocratic foreign visitors, who marveled at the prominence and monumentality of the buildings.[21] The fame of the Portuguese Esnoga synagogue, a classicist (Dutch: *strakke stijl*) building that had been at the heart of the community since its consecration in 1675, had spread throughout the Western Sephardic Diaspora.[22] In the services, prayers were recited to operatic melodies; an impressive teaching infrastructure provided the Portuguese-Jewish youth with the best possible (Hebrew) education, while at the Ets Haim seminary, rabbis, teachers, and *chazzanim* were trained to serve not only the Amsterdam congregation, but also the communities of London, Hamburg, New York, Paramaribo, and various other Sephardic *kehillot* in the Caribbean.

Opposite the Esnoga, of slightly earlier date and certainly not second in grandeur, was the center of the city's Ashkenazic life: a gradually expanding cluster of four synagogues, with a *mikveh*, a kosher meat hall, and the offices of the *parnasim* ("administrators") and the rabbinate attached to it. The ensemble testified to the rapid growth of the Ashkenazic community in the Low Countries: from 3,200 souls in the year 1700, to 14,000 only fifty years later.[23] Like a magnet, Amsterdam continued to draw, from the German *Kleinstaaterei* as well as from the eastern European territories, Jewish newcomers in search of better opportunities. Ashkenazic immigration had started in the early decades of the seventeenth century, with the coming of individual German Jews, whose traditions and *minhagim* ("halakhic

[21] E.g. Prince Heinrich of Prussia (*Opregte Groninger Courant*, September 6, 1768) and the Duke of Gloucester (*Opregte Groninger Courant*, June 27, 1769). In 1781, the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II – under the pseudonym of the Count of Falkenstein – visited the Portuguese synagogue: [Simon Stijl], *Amsterdam in zijne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen . . . vervolg op J. Wagenaars Amsterdam, of achttiende stuk* (Amsterdam, 1790), 153.

[22] For a detailed analysis of the architecture and history of the Esnoga, see Pieter Vlaardingerbroek, ed., *The Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam* (Zwolle, 2013).

[23] Jonathan I. Israel, "The Republic of the United Netherlands until about 1750: Demography and Economic Activity," in Blom *et al.*, eds., *History of the Jews*, 100. In contemporary Dutch testimonies, we read that, as a result of this rapid growth, the average housing arrangements in the Jewish quarter were extremely primitive – e.g. M[artinus] Houttuyn, *Bedenkingen over de sterflykheid en het getal des volks, te Amsterdam in vergelyking met andere plaatsen* (Amsterdam, 1783), 5.

custom") eventually formed the basis of Ashkenazic communal life in the Dutch Republic. In the early days, however, individual *Tedescos* generally joined the Sephardic religious infrastructure, visiting Portuguese synagogues and arranging their burials at the newly established Beth Haim cemetery near Ouderkerk aan de Amstel. When in 1639 their Portuguese brethren were united in one Talmud Torah congregation, they had been more or less forced to establish their own, separate "Hoogduitsche Joodsche Natie."[24]

Following the Khmelnytsky pogroms of 1648, increasing numbers of Polish Jews arrived in the city, who soon staked a claim for founding a community of their own. Much to the dismay of the "autochthonous" German Ashkenazim, their request was granted, if only briefly; in the summer of 1673, the municipal authorities were coaxed into enforcing a re-unification of the divided parties. Henceforth the *Polacos* were once again obliged to follow the local (i.e., German) rite, or else to retire to the home of their chief rabbi, who was entitled to have his own private *minyan* according to Polish *nusach*.[25] Henceforth, the only official ethnic division within Jewish Amsterdam was that between Ashkenazim and Sephardim.

The contrast between the two magnificent synagogues at one end of the Deventer Houtmarkt, and the unobtrusive Roman Catholic Mozes en Aäron Kerk that lay hidden behind the terraced façades in the western section, baffled many foreign visitors. The reason behind the discrepancy was a simple one: since the sixteenth century, the substantial Catholic minority in the Low Countries had been viewed as a potential extension of foreign Catholic powers, whereas the Jewish minorities were considered politically harmless.[26] Meanwhile, the (covert) presence of the Catholic church, and of the Protestant Zuiderkerk only a few blocks away, indicates that the area where the majority of the Amsterdam Jews resided was home to a mixed population.[27] When the first Jews arrived – in the 1590s, when

[24] Michman *et al., Pinkas*, 44f. [25] Ibid., 46–8.

[26] Ironically, it was the *conversos*' Christian background that had proven perilous in their earliest years in Protestant Amsterdam. In 1597, they were taken into custody on the charge of being Catholics; see David Franco Mendes, "Mizmor shir chanukkat ha-bayit," in *Kinnor David* (1789), MS EH 47 B 3, fol. 131. For an analysis of this and other foundational myths, see Herman Prins Salomon, "Myth and Anti-Myth? The Oldest Account Concerning the Origin of Portuguese Judaism at Amsterdam," *Lias* 16 (1989), 275–316.

[27] For reflections on intercommunal relations, integration, and Jewish cohesiveness in this urban setting, see Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "A Study in Intercommunal Relations in the Sephardi Diaspora: London and Amsterdam in the Eighteenth Century," in Chaya Brasz and Yosef Kaplan, eds., *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others* (Leiden, 2001), 41–58; and Adam Sutcliffe, "The Boundaries of Community: Urban Space and Intercultural Interaction in Early Modern Sephardi Amsterdam, and London," in Yosef Kaplan, ed., *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History* (Leiden, 2008), 19–31.

the first "New Christian" *conversos* appeared in the city – they chose to settle in the newly developed quarters at the city's east end, together with other migrants and local dwellers (like the painter Rembrandt) who could not afford to live on the canals. A formal ghetto was never imposed – in Amsterdam, the Jews always lived in mixed neighborhoods, often in large concentrations, with the presence of synagogues, schools, and kosher shops continuously attracting new immigrants. By contrast, the western parts of the city housed hardly any Jews, a pattern that was continued until well into the twentieth century.

The city's lenient, if not evasive, admission policies[28] were but one example of how Jewish immigration was handled by the local powers-that-be. The Republic had always lacked one uniform *Joden-reglement*, despite Hugo Grotius's famous attempt (commissioned in 1616) at formulating a set of binding regulations for the provinces of Holland and West Frisia.[29] Blandly ignoring Grotius's suggestions for repressive ruling, the Staten-Generaal (then the highest authority in the Republic) spent their meeting of December 12, 1619 issuing a decree that left all decisions on Jewish settlement to the local authorities. The so-called *plakaatboeken*, which collected the laws, ordinances, and other documents issued by the regional authorities, reveal a broad range of criteria, privileges, and legal conditions for Jewish settlement in the various *gewesten* ("regions"). The cities of Rotterdam, The Hague, and Leiden, for example, readily welcomed Jewish residents, as did the *gewesten* of Zeeland, Overijssel, Frisia, and Groningen. Other areas, such as bishopric Utrecht and the southern wool town of Tilburg, opted for warding off Jews as full-time residents, while allowing them daytime entrance to sell their goods at the local fairs. In these areas, Jews often chose the surrounding villages as their operating bases. Witness, e.g., the village of Maarssen near Utrecht, which at some point was said to accommodate more Jews than Christians, and soon counted several monumental Jewish country estates.

[28] The Amsterdam regulations, which remained in force until 1796, were designed to secure minimal yet clear-cut social and religious boundaries. The Jews were admitted on the condition that they refrain from all attempts at conversion, anti-Christian polemics, and inter-religious sexual relations: Bodian, "The Dutch Context: Working out a *Modus Vivendi*," in *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 53–75.

[29] *Remonstrantie nopende de ordre dije in de landen van Hollandt ende Westvrieslandt dijent gestelt op de joden*, ed. Jaap Meijer from the Ets Haim / Livraria Montezinos manuscript (Amsterdam, 1949). For Grotius's attitudes to Judaism in general, see Edwin Rabbie, "Grotius and Judaism," in Rabbie and Henk J. M. Nellen, eds., *Hugo Grotius, Theologian: Essays in Honour of G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 55 (Leiden, 2004), 108–11.

The early modern Republic thus was home to a rich variation of Jewish communities, urban as well as rural, each with its own economic, social, and cultural potential – and, inevitably, obstacles. The Jews' legal position was that of a *Natie* ("nation"), a medieval concept that defined ethnic minorities as collective, largely autonomous entities. The municipal authorities would negotiate with the leaders of each *Natie* about such things as taxes and the economic interests of host and guest nation, and make arrangements on matters of public order and security. The Jewish leadership was held responsible for the *Natie*'s internal organization, yet could always fall back on the Christian authorities when having to impose their rule. Education, healthcare, poverty, and criminality all fell under the care of the corporate nation which, like other migrant communities, was fully integrated into the overall urban infrastructure. This variety of political arrangements inevitably caused significant discrepancies in economic opportunity. In 1629, for example, the Amsterdam Jews were officially forbidden to work in the tobacco industry (but informally tolerated), while their *confrères* in Amersfoort and Nijkerk owned large tobacco firms that overtly employed Jewish *and* Christian workers.[30]

CURIOSITY AND AFFINITY BETWEEN JEWS AND GENTILES

Tacitly yet unanimously, modern historians have conveyed the impression that the early modern Jewish *Naties* and their Christian neighbors inhabited two separate worlds. This is partly due to their overwhelming interest in the Sephardic Golden Age and in the nineteenth-century emancipation process, which was often interpreted in the light of the vicissitudes of twentieth-century Jewish history. A cursory reading of eighteenth-century sources, however, yields a slightly more balanced picture. There we encounter, in a surprisingly systematic fashion, a mutual Jewish–Christian awareness that could assume the guise of outright curiosity, or even amicable affinity. One such example concerns the growing appreciation of the Dutch for their long-term Jewish neighbors. Due to the influx of Jews from the East, a marked difference had arisen in their perception of the "autochthonous" Jews, as opposed to the steady stream of immigrants. Many of these newcomers did not settle upon arrival but roamed the Republic in search of work, trading odds and ends, and occasionally resorting to theft and begging – which, according to Dutch common opinon, squarely contradicted traditional Jewish mores.[31] Against

[30] Michman *et al., Pinkas*, 29.

[31] Thus, Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel, *Over de armoede en bedelaary, met betrekkinge tot de provintie van Zeeland* (Goes, 1772), 38.

this background, an unambiguous *approchement* developed between the local Christian population and their original Jewish neighbors – a form of mutual interest that expressed itself on various levels.

First of all, we find that, as the eighteenth century proceeded, Jews were granted more economic opportunities. Legal restrictions were revoked, and cities like Utrecht, which had hitherto refused Jewish settlement, now suspended the age-old restrictions.[32] By way of motivation, the authorities referred to their high esteem for their Jewish neighbors, whom they had come to value as hardworking, honorable citizens. In the *gewest* Holland, Catholic and Jewish poor relief were given the same exemptions and excise taxes as the hitherto privileged Protestant parishes.[33] Indigenous Jews were allowed to serve as postmen, even if some fiercely protested this move.[34] Simultaneously, a campaign was raised against Jewish newcomers, who were shut out on account of their supposed vagabondage. In 1770, the Staten-Generaal issued a *plakaat* – motivated by a reference to an outbreak of the plague in Poland – that barred wandering Jews dressed in rags from entering the Republic.[35] By the same decree, the local Jewish population were forbidden to give food and shelter to their itinerant coreligionists.[36]

The growing affinity between the Dutch Christians and "their" Jews is further corroborated by daily press of the period. In the course of the eighteenth century, the Jewish communities had conquered their own undisputed space in these – often regional or local – media. The arrival of a new rabbi, the renovation of a synagogue, any memorable event that had befallen the *Natie* – they were reported in the local newspapers with genuine interest. When Levie Hartog Glogau was appointed rabbi of the Groningen *kehillah*, in the late summer of 1790, the *Ommelander Courant* offered a lengthy recapitulation of his first sermon, a discussion of a difficult talmudic passage which the rabbi, much to the delight of his new congregation, had been able to solve. With obvious relish, the paper also quoted from Glogau's inaugural speech, which had contained a digression "in praise of Groningen, its fresh air, beauty and location,

[32] Artikelen waarop aan de jooden . . . het recht van inwoning binnen de stad Utrecht zal worden vergunt (Utrecht, 1789); *Nieuwe Nederlandsche Jaarboeken* 24 (1789), 416–17, 547–53.

[33] *Zaaken van staat en oorlog, betreffende de Vereenigde Nederlanden zedert . . . 1780*, XX (Amsterdam, 1792), 252–5.

[34] *Missive van een Heer te Gorinchem, aan een vriend te Amsterdam, Wegens het aanstellen van Israëlitische Post-Boodens, Boven en behalven de reets aangestelde Staate Boodens, Van 's Hage, visa versa, op 's Hertogenbosch* (n.p., 1782).

[35] *Middelburgsche Courant*, September 11, 1770.

[36] *Groninger Courant*, November 30, 1779; *Nieuwe Ned. Jaarboeken* 24, 548–53; Johan Schrassert, *Codex Gelro Zutphanicus ofte handboeck* . . . (Harderwijk, 1740), 284–6.

which he had noticed upon arrival, just as [he had seen] the blessed freedom enjoyed by the Jews of the region."[37]

In a similar vein, the papers liked to foreground ordinary Jews who could boast of special achievements. In 1780, the Middelburg daily reported the death of one Izaak Abrahams of Gouda at the age of nearly 102, proudly adding that the aged Izaak had "assiduously attended the Jewish religious service until the end of his life, without missing a single occasion, in full possession of all his faculties."[38] From this and other items, we may deduce that "our Jews" had become part of the local tapestry of the towns and villages of the Republic – in stark contrast to the "foreign Jews" who, as common policy prescribed, were best kept out of the precinct. Needless to say, this exclusive strategy soon proved untenable; over the decades, migration continued, and vagabond Jews chose to settle down and, slowly but surely, were transformed into local, Dutch Jews.

The Dutch engagement with their Jewish neighbors, it should be added, was often reciprocated. Just as Christians would occasionally donate money on behalf of poor and oppressed Jews in other countries (e.g. when the Jews were expelled from Prague in 1745), rich Jews could include the Christian needy in their wills.[39] The Yiddish chronicles that were compiled in eighteenth-century Amsterdam also testify to a lively Jewish interest in the state and welfare of "unzere medines" ("our country").[40] Besides documenting Jewish history and events, the chronicles paid ample attention to social, political, and military events in the city as well as the Republic.[41] Political relations were analyzed, local news facts

[37] *Ommelander Courant*, August 24, 1790.

[38] *Middelburgsche Courant*, June 13, 1780.

[39] Abraham Braatbard, *Ayn Naye Kornayk fun 1740–1752*, MS Ros 486, § 41.

[40] An early example is Joseph ben Jacob Maarssen's *Bashraybung fun di rebeleray tsu Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1707), which documented the *aansprekersoproer* ("undertakers' rebellion") of 1696; see Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, "Yiddish Historiography in the Time of the Dutch Republic," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 15 (1981), 9–19. Later that century, a series of chronicles (and fragments) appeared that built on Menaḥem Amelander's *Yosippon* adaptation, *Sheyris Yisroel* (Amsterdam, 1743), most notably Braatbard, *Kornayk*; Zalman Prinz, *Kronik min shnas takmad ad shnas takmah* (Amsterdam, 1788); and Bendit Wing, *Lezikorn* (covering the period 1795–1812). For a detailed analysis of the corpus and the social and intellectual profiles of its authors, see Wallet, *Links in a Chain*, chs. 4–7.

[41] Interestingly enough, the late seventeenth-century Amsterdam Yiddish *Dinshtagishe un Fraytagishe Kurantn* concentrated on international economic and political news, mostly taken from Dutch newspapers. Jewish items received considerably less attention and were often translated from the non-Jewish press; cf. Hilde Pach, "Die Amsterdamer 'Dinstagishe un Fraitaghishe Kurantn' (1686–1687): wie jüdisch war die erste jiddische Zeitung?" in Susanne Marten-Finnis and Markus Winkler, eds., *Die jüdische Presse im europäischen Kontext, 1686–1990* (Bremen, 2006), 17–25.

recorded, and when foreign powers threatened to overcome the Republic, the Jewish chroniclers invariably expressed their undivided loyalty.

Central theme and protagonist in each of these chronicles was the city of Amsterdam, with its highly diverse population. The chronicle of Abraham ben Ḥayyim Braatbard, for example, documents in detail the 1748 Tax Collectors' Revolt, during which the citizens pillaged the homes of the much-hated tax collectors. Braatbard reports how the Amsterdam Jews chose not to rebel but protected the homes of tax collectors who lived in the Jewish quarter. He tells his readers that he himself witnessed how the looters were afraid to attack and praised the Jews as "a very strong nation." As a reward for their loyalty, one tax collector even donated several barrels of beer to the Jewish population, a gesture that ended in a spontaneous festivity during which the Jews brought their Sabbath candles out into the street.[42] On this occasion, as on many others documented in the chronicles of Braatbard, Zalman Prinz, and Bendit Wing, the Jews were part of the dynamics of Amsterdam city-life, confidently taking up their own position and interacting with their non-Jewish surroundings.

In other areas, too, Jewish engagement could transcend the boundaries of mere sympathetic observation, for example when Jews joined the educational infrastructure of the Christian majority. From the seventeenth century onward, a modest quota of Jewish youngsters were sent to the Latin schools, from where they entered the Dutch universities.[43] Law and medicine were particularly *en vogue* among this up-and-coming Jewish elite. On a less elitist level, Jews as a rule joined in with local and national days of fasting, prayer, and thanksgiving, thus participating in a civil religion that encompassed all Dutch citizens.[44] Even more striking is the late eighteenth-century development of Jews enrolling in the Dutch navy and serving in the fleet of the East Indies Company. This new trend started when Portuguese-Jewish merchant d'Almeida had lost his fortune in the Dutch-Caribbean, due to the British sanctions against the Dutch supporting the United States of America. Upon his escape to the Republic,

[42] Braatbard, *Kornayk*, §§ 114–15.

[43] H. J. Krom, K. van der Palm, and D. C. van Voorst, eds., *Verhandelingen over de verbeteringe der openbaare . . . Nederduitsche schoolen* (Vlissingen, 1871), 412–13; Nantko L. Dodde, *Joods onderwijs, een geschiedenis over het tijdvak 1200 tot 2000* ('s-Gravenhage, 2009).

[44] Peter van Rooden, "Dissenters en bededagen. Civil religion ten tijde van de Republiek," *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 107, 4 (1992), 703–12. One example of a sermon preached on such an occasion at the Esnoga is Abraham Hayyim de Jacob de Solomon de Meza's *Sermaõ moral que prégou . . . na ocaziao de hum dia solemne de oraçaõ, proclamado pelos SSres. Estados Geraës das Provincias Unidas* (Amsterdam, 1747).

d'Almeida joined the navy in order to take revenge on the British. Thereupon, the navy reached a formal agreement with Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Saul Levi, inviting other Jews to join their fleet. In return, Levi stipulated that the Jewish sailors be able to keep kosher and observe the Sabbath – circumstances allowing, of course. When the first Jews set sail, the rabbi came to bless the crew in person. According to contemporary newspapers, 1,000 Jews enrolled in the mission.[45]

Typically Dutch though they may seem, these expressions of mutual recognition ultimately depended on political developments that were evolving on a much larger European scale. In the vacuum that appeared between the dissolution of the medieval feudal structures and the founding of the nineteenth-century nation-states, urban and regional centers filled the gap, both as political powers and as benchmarks of identity.[46] The Dutch Republic, which had opted for a type of governance without a monarch, had always depended on strong regional identities. The most prosperous of those regions, the *gewest* Holland, had been leading in this respect. The *gewest* harbored various wealthy cities, each trying to secure its interests in the regional and national commercial fray. The majority of Christian and Jewish life concentrated in and around these urban centers, allowing both groups to develop feelings of local patriotism. Thus, the city – both as a concrete space and as an ensemble of people – became a decisive factor in the eighteenth-century civic identity of Jews and Christians alike.

MATERIAL AND POPULAR CULTURE

In 1718, Abraham Henriques Juliao had tired of his majolica dishes, and decided to exchange them for fashionable Delft imitation china. His previous penchant for Portuguese ceramics had been but one expression of the Amsterdam Sephardim's nostalgia for their country of origin. Yet, after so many years, Henriques's nostalgia had waned, as migrant spleen will. Besides, if the Sephardim's taste for furniture and decoration continued to reflect their complex (Iberian, colonial, Jewish, and Dutch) loyalties, the Amsterdam shops and markets were well stocked to cater for such cosmopolitan needs – which were shared, it should be added, by

[45] *Middelburgsche Courant*, August 28, 1781; Eduard van Biema, "Het Nederlandsche zeewezen en de Amsterdamsche Joden in het einde der 18de eeuw," *Amsterdamsch Jaarboekje 1901*, 76–91.

[46] Maarten R. Prak, "The Dutch 'City Republics': Guilds, Militias, and Civic Politics," in Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, eds., *Living in the City: Urban Institutions in the Low Countries, 1200–2010* (Abingdon, 2012), 46–62.

many of their Christian neighbors.[47] Through those same shops and markets, the Jewish immigrés from southern and eastern Europe also adjusted themselves to the local diet. In the Ashkenazic almanac of 1733, we find that the list of kosher fish and vegetables was arranged according to Dutch seasonal availability.[48] Local fashion, too, inevitably entered the Jewish home, if not always the synagogue. In 1732, the Ashkenazic lay leadership managed to ban the crinoline from the synagogue on account of immodesty; their campaign against the wig, however, was continued for several decades and seems to have remained unsuccessful.[49]

A similar, gradually shifting balance from migrant to local tastes can be observed in Jewish *immaterial* culture. Popular culture, especially, was in growing unison with leisurely life in the eighteenth-century metropolis. Jews liked to frequent the Amsterdamse Schouwburg, despite the fact that Jewish actors were not allowed to perform there. In the city's warehouses, Jewish theatres successfully staged Yiddish adaptations of local box-office hits, which were occasionally attended by non-Jewish spectators.[50] In the Esnoga synagogue, the melodies sung by the *chazzanim* relied on the same late-Baroque idiom as the motets devoted to the Virgin Mary in the nearby Mozes en Aäron Kerk.[51] Jewish popular authors too, kept a keen eye on local examples. In 1710, Yiddish author Jacob Maarssen took a Dutch translation of Boccacio's *Decamaron* as the starting point of his *Shayne artlikhe geshikhtn*.[52] And by the end of the century, the "Diskursn" of the

[47] Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, "Matters Matter: Material Culture of Dutch Sephardim (1600–1750)," in Shlomo Berger *et al.*, eds., "Mapping Jewish Amsterdam: Early Modern Perspectives," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 44 (Louvain, 2012), 191–216, esp. 213–14.

[48] *Luach shel shnat 5493* (Amsterdam, 1732).

[49] Cf. Samuel Mulder's presentation of the relevant sources in *Algemeen Handelsblad*, August 19, 1861, and Tsila Rädecker, *Schuld en Boete in Joods Amsterdam. Kerktucht bij de Hoogduitse joodse gemeente 1737–1764* (Amsterdam, 2012), 48–51.

[50] Jacob Campo Wyerman, "Schouwburg der Smoussen," *Den echo des weerelds* 1 (1725), 177–84, gives a vivid description of the Yiddish theatre, which abounds in anti-Jewish stereotypes and negative judgment. Next to the Ashkenazi theatre, the city harbored a flourishing Spanish comedy, cf. Pieter Scheltema, *Aemstel's oudheid of gedenkwaardigheden van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1872), 198–204.

[51] For the local Sephardic musical tradition, see Israel Adler, *Musical Life and Traditions of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam in the XVIIIth Century* (Jerusalem, 1974). For an analysis of eighteenth-century music manuscripts as preserved in the Ets Haim library, see Edwin Seroussi, "The Ancient Modernity of the Liturgical Music of the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam," in Albert van der Heide and Irene E. Zwiep, eds., *Jewish Studies and the European Academic World*,. Collection de la Revue des Études juives (Paris, 2005), 15–21.

[52] Marion Aptroot, "I Know This Book of Mine Will Cause Offence … A Yiddish Adaptation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (Amsterdam 1710)," *Zutot. Perspectives on Jewish Culture* (2003), 152–9, esp. 153.

Alte und Naye Kille (1797–8), a series of Yiddish pamphlets debating the benefits of religious conservatism versus modernization, were modeled upon Dutch satirical texts.[53] Conversely, Enlightened Jewish writings began to attract a new Christian audience. In 1725, a third edition appeared of A. Goedart's translation of the *Historia de gli riti hebraici* (1637), Leone Modena's early plea for social tolerance.[54] In later decades, the life and work of Moses Mendelssohn, of course, received due attention,[55] as did Naphtali Hirsch Wessely's *Divre Shalom ve-Emet* (1782), which appeared in Dutch immediately upon its – much-disputed – publication in Hebrew.[56]

THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

In the late 1670s, German Rabbi Yekutiel Blitz traveled to Amsterdam to carry out a pioneering project: the publication of a "modern" Yiddish Bible translation.[57] Following Christian models, it covered Scripture rather than *chumash* (the "Five Books of Moses"), was divided into chapters and verses (alongside the traditional *parashiyyot* ["weekly portions"]), and contained a smoothly literal rather than paradigmatic *taytsh* ("Yiddish") translation. In his Yiddish introduction, Blitz acknowledged that Sephardic biblical literacy had been a source of envy and inspiration. Like Shabtai Bass, who visited the city in the same year as Blitz, he was a great admirer of the Amsterdam Talmud Torah school. He particularly extolled the achievements of Rabbi Moses Rephael d'Aguilar (d. 1679), who had acquainted scores of pupils with the arts of grammar and oratory – a training that had left them with an unparalleled grasp of the biblical text. Where the average Ashkenaz would be able to reproduce nothing but the moral tales of the *Tsenerene*, d'Aguilar's pupils could actually offer lexical explanations of the Hebrew original, with accurate reference to chapter and verse. And this, Blitz emphasized, was a vital condition for engaging in polemical debates

[53] Jozeph Michman and Marion Aptroot, *Storm in the Community: Yiddish Polemical Pamphlets of Amsterdam Jewry 1797–1798* (Cincinnati, 2002), 9–11.

[54] *Kerk-zeeden en de Gewoonten die huiden onder gebruik zyn onder de Jooden* (Amsterdam, 1725).

[55] *Wijsgeerige verhandelingen, brieven en gesprekken, van Moses Mendelssohn. Uit het Hoogduitsche vertaald, en met aantekeningen en het leven van den autheur verrijkt door G. Brender à Brandis* (Leiden, 1788).

[56] *Woorden der waarheid en des vredes*, published together with Mendelssohn's edition of Menasseh's *Verlossing der Jooden* (The Hague, 1782).

[57] On the result, which was published 1678, see the literature mentioned in Marion Aptroot, "Yiddish Bibles in Amsterdam," in Shlomo Berger, ed., *The Bible in/and Yiddish* (Amsterdam, 2007), 46 n. 3.

with Christian scholars, a popular seventeenth-century pursuit at which the Amsterdam Sephardim had always excelled.

Blitz's juxtaposing of Ashkenazic and Sephardic erudition obviously anticipates the many eighteenth-century critiques of traditional Ashkenazic education. Simultaneously, however, it illustrates the complex set of axes (local and international, Christian and Jewish, Ashkenazic and Sephardic) along which cultural transfer could transpire in the Dutch Republic. In early modern Amsterdam, a Jew from Witmund could strive to improve Yiddish Hebraism by implementing textual strategies that were used by his Portuguese *confrères* in their learned dialogs with the Dutch Protestant clergy. For a printer, he could hire the renowned Uri Fayvish Halevi, whose father and grandfather had helped to build the Sephardic community and whose gentile business partner had issued a Dutch *Statenvertaling* (state-authorized Bible translation) in 1662. That Blitz's case was no exception is suggested by the fact that, the same year, Joseph Witzenhausen also visited Amsterdam in order to issue an unabridged Yiddish Bible translation.[58] Passing over Halevi, Witzenhausen chose to team up with the no less famous Joseph Athias, who had previously collaborated with the Utrecht Hebraist Johannes Leusden in producing the ambitious *Biblia accuratissima* (1667).[59] The Athias–Leusden collaboration is but one example of the Jewish contribution to early modern Dutch Christian Hebraism. Another, somewhat later *cause célèbre* is that of Eleazar Soesman, who taught Hebrew at the city's Athenaeum Illustre, published a grammar that was relished by the Amsterdam bourgeoisie (the *Mohar Israel* of 1741) and, around the same time, was the only Ashkenazic Jew to engage in polemics with Protestant theologians.[60]

Situated at the heart of a large commercial network, with official censorship being limited to "blasphemous Socinianism," Amsterdam was an obvious starting point for many Jewish book-projects. The city's non-Jewish booksellers, in their turn, were eager to collaborate on these multilingual ventures. Printer Jan Jansson, for one, proudly announced (in Hebrew) that his presses were capable of handling any exotic alphabet.[61] That such profitable examples of Jewish–Christian collaboration were not limited to the capital can be deduced from the career of typesetter-printer

[58] For Witzenhausen's project, see ibid.

[59] On the Leusden–Athias collaboration, see Theo Dunkelgrün, "Like a Blind Man Judging Colors: Joseph Athias and Johannes Leusden Defend their 1667 Hebrew Bible," in Berger *et al.*, eds., *Mapping Jewish Amsterdam*, 79–115.

[60] Wallet, *Links in a Chain*, 75–9 and nn. 189–91.

[61] In a colophon to his 1758 edition of *Be'er ha-Torah*; see Shlomo Berger, *Producing Redemption in Amsterdam: Early Modern Yiddish Books in Paratextual Perspective*, Studies in Jewish History and Culture 37 (Leiden, 2013), 197.

Loeb ben Moses Soesmans, who left the city for other, even more liberal centers, where he realized various key publications of what Shmuel Feiner has labeled "the early Haskalah."[62] The most adventurous of these was his edition of *Chokhmat ha-Shorashim* by Naphtali Hirsch Ulmann (1781), a German disciple of the philosophers Wolff and Leibniz.[63] The costs of this controversial publication were covered by tobacco merchant Benjamin Cohen of Amersfoort,[64] a gesture which indicates that enlightened publications were embraced by the (provincial) Ashkenazic upper class. The interest of the Sephardim, on the other hand, was confined to the literary fringes of these projects. By the 1780s, the roles had been reversed. The Ashkenazim had taken the intellectual lead, and the Sephardim's share was reduced to adding a poetic footnote to their scientific interests.[65]

In the course of the eighteenth century, this reversal of roles had been prepared by various changes in Dutch Jewish literacy. In Sephardic circles, Spanish eventually lost its prime position as a literary language; after 1730, the acculturated aristocracy preferred to write and converse in French, while the bourgeois semielite chose Hebrew as the medium of their literary activities. Organized in societies named *Miqra Qodesh* or *Amadores das Musas* they produced a considerable corpus of classicist, mildly secular, and utterly mediocre Hebrew *bellettrie*.[66] The choice of Hebrew as a literary medium had been a significant departure from the original diglossia, where Hebrew articulated matters pertaining to religion, and the vernacular served all other needs. By contrast, the Amsterdam Ashkenazic community never relinquished its initial, Hebrew–Yiddish diglossia. Hebrew continued to be used to confirm rabbinic hegemony, and until 1800, the vast majority of

[62] For an account of Soesmans's career, see Sigmund Seeligmann, *Het geestelijk leven in de Hoogduitsche Joodsche gemeente te 's Gravenhage* (The Hague, 1914; reprint from Desiré van Zuiden, *Geschiedenis der Hoogduitsche Joden in 's Gravenhage* [The Hague, 1913]), 52–7; cf. also Louis Hirschel, "Cultuur en volksleven," in Hendrik Brugmans and Abraham Frank, eds., *Geschiedenis van de Joden in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1940), 474–5.

[63] Seeligmann, *Geestelijk leven*, 58–62; for Ulmann in the Netherlands, see Fred van Lieburg, "On Naphtali Herz Ulman's Biography and the Reception of his Works in The Netherlands," *Zutot. Perspectives on Jewish Culture* (2004), 58–65; Reinier Munk, *Naftali Herz Ulman, een vroege maskil* (Leiden, 2003); and Ruderman, "The Hague Dialogues," in Berger *et al.*, eds., *Mapping Jewish Amsterdam*, 221–40.

[64] On Cohen's political, Orangist involvement, see below, pp. 917–20.

[65] Cf. Irene E. Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered: The Dutch Eighteenth Century," in Resianne Fontaine *et al.*, eds., *Sepharad in Ashkenaz: Medieval Knowledge and Eighteenth-Century Enlightened Jewish Discourse* (Amsterdam, 2007), 296–9.

[66] Shlomo Berger and Irene Zwiep, "Epigones and the Formation of New Literary Canons: Sephardi Anthologies in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam," in Berger and Zwiep, eds., *Epigonism and the Dynamic of Jewish Culture*, Studia Rosenthaliana 40 (Louvain, 2008), 147–58, and the scholarly literature mentioned there.

books put on sale by the houses of Frankfurt, Rofe, and Proops were printed in Hebrew. Between 1700 and 1770, however, a secondary elite of printers, book-vendors, and teachers also began to issue publications in Yiddish, which catered for the continental market and aimed at educating a lay audience that had been hitherto neglected by the rabbinic leadership. Part of this new corpus – especially the elementary grammars and exegetical works – was meant to strengthen traditional Jewish knowledge.[67] Other booklets aimed at teaching more practical skills. The epistolaries compiled by The Hague school teacher Joseph Maarssen, and especially his *Tiqqun socherim* of 1714, are early examples of such autodidact manuals, designed to help Jewish businessmen and other professionals to find their bearings in the world of general commerce and etiquette.

If we briefly compare the two developments, we may conclude that the new Sephardic Hebrew literacy, experimental though it was, remained an exclusive pastime. It involved its authors in a small international network of dilettante literary friendships that reached from Simone Calimani in Venice to Ephraim Luzzatto in London, yet left them rather out of touch with their immediate Amsterdam environment.[68] The Amsterdam Yiddish corpus, by contrast, was inclusive, practical, and bent on the *Demokratisierung* of knowledge and skills. Its authors wished to elevate the anonymous European-Jewish readership,[69] by strengthening their Jewish heritage and by teaching them to better understand the world in which they lived. It is tempting to conclude that these efforts contributed to the relative ease with which the Ashkenazim grasped the new opportunities that arose after 1796. By then, the roles once again had been reversed. The time when the Ashkenazim had looked upon their Portuguese coreligionists for intellectual inspiration had passed forever.

THE RELIGIOUS INFRASTRUCTURE

When asked to list the main attributes of Jewish religious experience in the Republic, several iconic elements come to mind. One immediately thinks

[67] Hava Turniansky, "On Yiddish Didactic Literature in Amsterdam (1700–1750)" [Hebrew], *Studies in the History of Dutch Jewry* 4 (Jerusalem, 1984), 163–77; Irene E. Zwiep, "Adding the Reader's Voice: Early Modern Ashkenazi Grammars of Hebrew," *Science in Context* 20, 2 (2007), 163–95; Wallet, *Links in a Chain*, ch. 5.

[68] A telling example is provided by Franco Mendes, who claimed that the community refused to have his Hebrew poem on the Esnoga's anniversary recited in public; *Kinnor David*, 130.

[69] Shlomo Berger, "Early Modern Yiddish Books and the Emergence of the Anonymous Reader," paper presented at the international workshop "On Men and Women Reading Yiddish: Between Manuscript and Print" (Amsterdam, February 19, 2013).

of the Amsterdam *conversos*' tortuous road to "rejudaization," with the skepticism of Juan de Prado, Uriel da Costa, and Spinoza as perhaps its most extreme expression.[70] At the other end of the scale, this occasional skepticism was counter-balanced by a deep-seated spirituality.[71] It was this part of the local *converso* mentality that prompted Rabbi Isaac Aboab da Fonseca to publish a Hebrew translation (1655) of Abraham Cohen Herrera's *Puerta del Cielo*, just as it later inspired David Franco Mendes to copy the mystical writings of Moses Chaim Luzzatto, thirty years after his sojourn in the city (1740–3).[72] In a similar category, we may place the Sephardim's response to the messianic aspirations of Sabbatai Zevi,[73] who was embraced by the masses but opposed by members of the rabbinic establishment, most notoriously by "imported Hakham" Jacob Sasportas (Oran, *c.* 1610–98) and, long after the upheaval, by the controversial Hakham Tzvi Ashkenazi (1656–1718).[74] This prolonged messianic fervor, it should be added, did not remain limited to Sephardic circles. In 1718, the Ashkenazic chronicler and *shammash* Layb ben Oyzer was still fascinated by Zevi's muddled attempt at becoming humanity's savior and, especially, by the disappointment it had caused among Amsterdam Jewry.[75]

On the more every-day level of Halakhah and Jewish custom, we encounter a regional diversity that neatly mirrors the disparity of the local Jewish arrangements throughout the Republic. By the same token, there was no obvious orientation on urban centers like Amsterdam or Rotterdam as touchstones of halakhic normativity. Judging by various famous *topoi* in Dutch Halakhah, *dayanim* in the Low Countries felt free to challenge the authority of Joseph Karo's canonical *Shulḥan Arukh*.

[70] Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford, 2003); Yirmiahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics I: The Marrano of Reason* (Princeton, 1989); David S. Katz and Jonathan I. Israel, eds., *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews* (Leiden, 1990).

[71] The question whether the Amsterdam "Catholics without faith and Jews without knowledge" indeed suffered from a "Spaltung des Bewustseins" ("split soul"), as Carl Gebhardt famously phrased it in 1925, has been a matter of debate; see the literature mentioned in n. 8.

[72] Nissim Yosha, *Myth and Metaphor: Abraham Cohen Herrera's Philosophical Interpretation of the Lurianic Kabbalah* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1994).

[73] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah 1626–1676* (Princeton, 1973), 518–45.

[74] Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatean Controversies* (New York, 1990); Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), esp. 131ff.

[75] Hava Turniansky, review of Zalman Shazar, ed., *Sippur ma'ase Shabtai Zvi. Bashraybung fun Shabse Zvi* (Jerusalem, 1978), *Kiryat Sepher* 54 (1979), 161–6; Paul Ira Radensky, "Leyb ben Ozer's 'Bashraybung fun Shabsai Tsvi': An Ashkenazic Appropriation of Sabbatianism," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 88, 1–2 (1997), 43–56.

Siding with Isserles against Karo (*Yoreh De'ah* 89:1), the Amsterdam rabbis ordained that the period between eating meat and dairy need not exceed one hour, provided that grace after meals was said to mark the end of the first meal. They also overruled *Yoreh De'ah* 115:1 by taking a lenient stance on *chalav Yisrael*, allowing, under certain circumstances, the consuming of dairy products made from milk that had not been produced under Jewish supervision.[76] If anything, both examples illustrate the relative confidence with which the Dutch rabbinate formulated a distinct *minhag* and thus contributed to a local religious identity.

The most prominent marker of Jewish religious life in early modern Amsterdam, however, was not its devout or halakhic content but its infrastructure, which was characterized by a relatively high degree of fragmentation. In the young Portuguese-Jewish community, Jewish learning was offered to the public via a broad range of organizations that resembled the Spanish *academias* and Dutch *genootschappen* more than the talmudic academies of central and eastern Europe. Traditional *talmud Torah* was pursued in the *jesibot* funded by the wealthy Buenos and the Rotterdam De Pinto family. In addition, many of the community's charitable societies offered their members biblical courses, quite often under rabbinic supervision.[77] In 1728, the *yeshivat Ets Haim* was founded, whose serial responsa collection *Peri Ets Haim* [The Fruit of the Tree of Life] has often been mentioned as one of the earliest Jewish periodicals. Alongside this new *yeshiva*, however, small groups such as *Miqra Qodesh* and the *Shomrim la-Boqer* society, chaired by poet and preacher Isaac Cohen Belinfante (d. 1781), continued their pious studies in the private setting of their members' stately homes.

Unlike the Sephardim, the Amsterdam Ashkenazim seem to have lacked such bourgeois biblical salons; they could, however, boast of an equally lively *chevre* culture. Outside the schools and societies, religious learning was further transmitted in the even more private sphere of the family, where *chumash* and *musar* ("moral edification") were absorbed through the Yiddish *mameloshn*. Ten years after the founding of Ets Haim, a *Beth midrash yeshivat bachurim* was established, when Polish-born Aryeh Leyb ben Saul was appointed chief rabbi of the Amsterdam congregation (in 1740). Significantly, the *yeshiva* never obtained a formal status. Its inefficacy as an educational institute is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that Aryeh Leyb's son and successor Saul chose to send his own son Jacob Moses

[76] This we learn from the Peri Chadash (i.e., the Italian-born traveling scholar Hizkiah di Silva), who published part of his *Yoreh De'ah* commentary during his one-year stay in Amsterdam in 1691.

[77] Fischer, *The Centering of the Bible*, ch. 1.

(1748–1815) all the way to Poland to receive a proper rabbinical training.[78] The fact that the Amsterdam rabbinate, though presiding over a large and expanding congregation, never aspired to greater halakhic authority is a strong indication of the temperate nature of Dutch-Jewish religiosity. This deep-seated lack of devotional ambition, it should be added, seems to have worked both ways. In moderate eighteenth-century Amsterdam, Jewish Deist critiques of religion were about as rare as expressions of radical religious extremism.[79]

Another outstanding feature of the religious atmosphere in the Dutch Republic was the possibility to freely convert from Christianity to Judaism. In the 1590s, the Portuguese New Christians had been the first to grasp this opportunity. In subsequent centuries, many Jews-to-be traveled to the Republic to effectuate their conversion to the Mosaic faith. Those who chose to stay often contributed to Jewish cultural life from their former gentile backgrounds. Moses ben Abraham Avinu Haas, who converted in 1686–7, became deeply involved in Hebrew printing, and the convert Abraham ben Jacob provided the copper engravings for the illuminations of the 1695 Amsterdam Haggadah.[80] A century later, the Christian Graanboom family from Sweden even produced a highly esteemed rabbi, who in 1797 presided over the enlightened *Adas Yeshurun* congregation.[81] In the early 1800s, this open policy was continued, so that every now and then foreign authorities would lodge a complaint with the Dutch government concerning citizens who had left home as Christians only to return as Jews – after a trip to the Low Countries.[82]

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cross-overs in the opposite direction seem to have been scarce. Jews who underwent baptism resumed their lives under the name of Christiaan or Christine, severed all ties with their original community, and renounced their Jewish selves. Only occasionally did they address their former coreligionists from their new religious identities.[83] A different, more pressing issue was the religious status of illegitimate children born from Jewish (often Sephardic)–Christian

[78] Michman *et al., Pinkas*, 62. [79] *Pace* Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization*.

[80] Alexander van der Haven, "Allowing Apostasy: Toleration of Gentile Conversion to Judaism in the Dutch Republic," paper presented at the conference "Places of Encounter: Jews and Non-Jews in the Low Countries between 1500 and 1800" (Antwerp, March 14, 2013).

[81] Leo Fuks, "The Hebrew Chronicle of the Swedish Family Graanboom," in Fuks, *Aspects of Jewish Life in the Netherlands: A Selection from the Writings of Leo Fuks* (Assen, 1995), 100–30.

[82] Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*, pp. 114–15.

[83] Bart Wallet, "Het Réveil als 'Joodsche Hervorming'," in Fred van Lieburg, ed., *Opwekking van de natie. Het protestantse Réveil in Nederland* (Hilversum, 2012), 185–210.

relations.[84] In some cases, an attempt was made to have the bastard child accepted into the Portuguese-Jewish community.[85] Abraham d'Oliveyra and Steyntje Hopman, however, saw their son baptized in the Amsterdam Oude Kerk on March 19, 1809. There can be no doubt that little Abraham Christiaan Olivier (d. 1869), himself a father of nine Christian children, was subsequently raised *outside* the city's Jewish community.

EARLY POLITICIZATION

After so many centuries of life without sovereignty, the Jews in the Diaspora had developed numerous ways and means of dealing with non-Jewish power. Taking Shmuel's golden rule *dina de-malkhuta dina* ("the law of the government is the law") as their point of departure, they had honored and obeyed generations of rulers, as far as Halakhah allowed. The political situation in the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, however, seemed to defy established routine. There being neither a king nor an emperor, the Staten-Generaal served as the country's highest authority. Furthermore, the Republic's decentralized organization left ample room for regional and local autonomy. And, to complicate matters even further, the scions of the Orange-Nassau dynasty acted as official *stadhouders*, yet their precise role and influence were hard to estimate, to say the least. As a result, the Jewish new-comers, seasoned subjects though they were, were puzzled by the political constellation they encountered upon their arrival in the Low Countries.

From the beginning, however, both the Portuguese and the High-German communities managed to establish fruitful contacts on all relevant levels: from the municipal councils – their chief interlocutors – via the *gewesten* and the Staten-Generaal, up to the House of Orange.[86] Their keen perception of this intricate balance of powers was amply demonstrated when *stadhouder* Frederik Hendrik paid his famous visit to the Amsterdam Portuguese synagogue in 1642. On that occasion, the

[84] In theory, sexual relations between Amsterdam's Jewish and Christian denizens were forbidden. In practice, the local bailiff was easily bribed into waiving the fine for such transgressions. See Lotte van de Pol, *Der Bürger und die Hure. Das sündige Gewerbe in Amsterdam der frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006), 133, 169.

[85] Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*, 115.

[86] Due to their New Christian past, the Sephardim were able to take greater initiative in this area. They had little difficulty moving in political circles and occasionally held diplomatic offices – witness "pirate-rabbi" Samuel Palache (*c.* 1550–1616), who, in the course of his colourful career, also acted as consul for the Moroccan throne; cf. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe* (Baltimore, 2003).

ever-eloquent Menasseh ben Israel gave an address that neatly expressed the complex affections of the city's Portuguese Jews. "It is no longer Castile or Portugal that we consider our homeland", he assured his audience, "but the Netherlands. We no longer serve the kings of Spain and Portugal, but their excellencies the Staten-Generaal and your Royal Highness, whose blessed arms protect us."[87] In order to satisfy all levels of government, Menasseh took great care to mention both the Staten-Generaal and the Orange regent in one respectful breath.

In the course of the eighteenth century, however, this tradition of tacitly negotiating the existing power structures made way for a much more explicit political positioning. This *Politisierung* intensified during the final quarter of the century, when the Dutch political landscape was becoming increasingly fragmented, and conservative Orangists were losing ground to democratic "patriots." In this struggle over values and power, the Jews opted for traditional security rather than opportunity-through-revolution. They chose to support the House of Orange, their principal anchor in a long age of clientelism and patronage, to which they felt connected through a network of loyal Court Jews. The authority of the local regents, on the other hand, depended on parties that were not always accessible to Jews (i.e., the guilds), and thus could not be trusted to act in their best interest. In this constellation, the House of Orange, however absolutist and alien to democratic trends, was considered a reliable ally against potentially hostile authorities. The Orange dynasty, in its turn, eagerly welcomed every possible support. Thus, the rapid *Politisierung* of Dutch Jewry evolved, anticipating parallel developments elsewhere in Europe by several decades.[88]

A key moment in this development was the patriotic revolt of 1787, a civil war in which progressive *patriotten*, eager to rethink the *ancien régime*, confronted the conservative Orangist party. When *stadhouder* William V and his wife Wilhelmina of Prussia were forced to flee The Hague, they operated partly from Amersfoort, where the house of merchant, banker, and patron of the arts Benjamin Cohen was turned into the headquarters of the Orangist movement.[89] In the meantime, Amsterdam had fallen into

[87] *Menasse Ben Israels vvelkomst . . . aen de Hoogh-gebooren, Prince van Oranjen Frederic Henric* (Amsterdam, 1642), 5–6.

[88] For this *Politisierung* as a general Dutch phenomenon, see Niek C. F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit 1750–1900* (Amsterdam, 2004), esp. 69–96, 175–221.

[89] Cf. Jacques Zwarts, *Het verblijf van Prins Willem V in Amersfoort ten huize van den joodschen tabaksplanter Benjamin Cohen* (Amsterdam, 1921); Jaap Meijer, *Zij lieten hun sporen achter. Joodse bijdragen tot de Nederlandse beschaving* (Utrecht, 1964), 99–103; and Moses H. Gans, *Memorboek. Platenatlas van het leven der joden in Nederland van de middeleeuwen tot 1940* (Baarn, 1972), 254–8.

patriot hands. This happened after fierce clashes in which Jews had not hesitated to participate, despite threats of popular fury and anti-Jewish retaliations by the patriotic leadership.[90] In the autumn of 1787, the Orangists, aided by Prussian troops, managed to return to power. Their victory was celebrated in the Amsterdam Jewish quarter, with orange decorations and, on the Nieuwe "Joden" Herengracht, a light-projection on a silk screen showing the symbol of Jewish Orangist devotion: the Amersfoort mansion of Benjamin Cohen. Wilhelmina of Prussia, in return, rewarded these tokens of solidarity by donating one of her royal dresses to the Amersfoort synagogue, where it was turned into a magnificent *parochet* ("curtain").[91] Still, for all these expressions of particular Jewish sentiment, the inevitable had happened: in the course of the revolt, the Jews had become part of a broader segment of society, a "we" that had united Jews and non-Jews under one political banner.

The early *Politisierung* of the Jews in the Low Countries did yield some fruit in the years immediately following 1787, such as the possibility to finally settle in Orangist Utrecht.[92] It is, however, the irony of history that most results were achieved in the French-Batavian period, when the Orange dynasty had fled the country and sought refuge in nearby England. Only in 1796 did the First National Assembly, echoing French revolutionary trends, declare its Jewish citizens coequals. The decree had been preceded by a fierce debate in which the Jews were chastized for their Orangism, an attitude the assembly chose to dismiss as tragically counter-intuitive.[93] Yet, eventually, principle did prevail over resentment, and Jewish Emancipation was decreed. Shortly after, the first Jewish members of parliament were appointed. Next to physician Hartog de Hartog Lémon, former merchant and slave-owner Hermanus Leonard Bromet (1724–1812) was elected delegate for the Batavian Republic.[94]

Through Bromet, who had returned to the Republic after spending twenty-one years in Surinam, we learn that the Dutch-Jewish *Politisierung* had not been an isolated case. For many, the social status of Jews in the colonies had become a source of inspiration, a benchmark for their own position in the Dutch "motherland." In Surinam, the Sephardic and

[90] As expressed in the 1787 pamphlet *De Nederlandsche Patriotten aan hunne Joodsche Medeburgers!* (Amsterdam, *c.* 1789).

[91] Ebeltje Hartkamp-Jonxis, "De voorhang van de synagoge in Amersfoort, of een japon van Wilhelmina van Pruisen," *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* (1985), 401–14.

[92] See above, pp. 902, 904.

[93] *Dagverhaal der Handelingen van de Nationale Vergadering*, vol. II (The Hague, 1796), 496.

[94] Bart Wallet, "Bromet, Hermanus Leonard," in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*: www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/BWN_1780tot1830/lemmata/data/Bromet.

Ashkenazic minorities had always been viewed as part of the small white elite, and thus had escaped many of the restrictions that had been imposed upon their coreligionists in the Republic. In theory and in practice, Surinam Jews could occupy a number of civil as well as military functions.[95] From 1671 onward, there existed a separate Jewish army corps,[96] and politician Bromet confessed that he, together with other Jews, had joined man-hunts organized to round up run-away slaves.[97] Upon his return to the Republic, together with his wife, child and "the negro boy Candide," Bromet referred to his Surinam experience – and to the American War of Independence – when pleading the cause of Dutch-Jewish Emancipation.[98] Enlightenment in the colony thus nourished political discourse in the Dutch metropolis. In Bromet's speeches, the French and American revolutions were adduced to seal a development that had evolved in the Low Countries in the course of several "republican" decades.

BECOMING DUTCH (NIEUWE NEDERLANDERS): THE PERIOD 1795–1815

The Batavian-French period (1795–1815) constituted a tumultuous phase in Dutch-Jewish history, during which the Jewish communities were forced to redefine themselves. In retrospect, the period was one of intense experimentation with new forms and ideas, which often existed side by side with remnants of previous codes and mores. Two important processes, which also determined Dutch-Jewish life after 1815, should be briefly mentioned here.

First of all, we notice that, in the new constellation, relations *within* the Jewish community suddenly became politicized. Whereas in the *ancien régime* the community as a whole had taken sides, internal Jewish political opinion now became divided, with the rabbis and *parnasim* clinging on to the existing corporate structures. Against this conservative background, a small but influential *avant-garde* decided to relinquish their former

[95] Robert Cohen, ed., *The Jewish Nation in Surinam: Historical Essays* (Amsterdam, 1982), 11–21, 57–63.

[96] *Naam-boekje van de wel.ed. heeren der hoge Indiasche regeeringe* [. . .] *op Batavia* [. . .] *ultimo december 1779*.

[97] *Briev van H.L. Bromet [. . .] ten betooge dat de wapening der Jooden, zelfs op den Sabat, voor de vrijheid in den burgerstaat en de defensie van het land, volgens haare wetten, geoorloofd en geboden is* and *Tweede briev van H.L. Bromet* . . . (Amsterdam, 1795).

[98] For the Surinam-Jewish reception of the American example, cf. Jonathan Israel, "Dutch Jews, David Nassy, and the 'General Revolution' in the Carribean (1770–1800)," in Berger *et al.*, eds., *Mapping Jewish Amsterdam*, 173–90.

Orangist position and join the progressive patriotic camp, in an attempt at securing civic equality and changing the original communal organization. The latter inevitably met with fierce inner-Jewish resistance. As a result, in 1797, the Amsterdam Ashkenazic community was divided into a politically conservative *Alte Kille*, and a *Naye Kille*, formally known as *Adas Yeshurun*, which advocated social integration but never developed a distinct religious agenda – and thus, it should be added, can hardly be qualified as the first Dutch attempt at Jewish Reform.[99] When, in 1808, the Ashkenazim were reunited at the instigation of Louis Napoleon, the impact of the *Naye Kille* – on Israelite identity, and on the ideological orientation of the leadership – proved lasting.[100] Many of its former members, notably the Asser, Wertheim, and Visser families, had joined the Jewish administrative circles, where they continued to endorse their progressive ideals.

The year 1808 also witnessed the formal transformation of Dutch Jewry from a patchwork of independent local *Naties* into one *Israëlitisch kerkgenootschap*, modeled after the French example. For a long time, the restructuring, first under a Dutch Opperconsistorie, then under the Paris Consistoire Central, was thwarted by the conservative forces.[101] In 1814, however, King Willem I continued the previous centralizing policies, now under supervision of a Hoofdcommissie tot de zaken der Israëliten ("Chief Committee for Israelite Affairs") that reported directly to the Dutch Ministerie voor de Hervormde Eredienst (lit. "Ministry for the Dutch Reformed Service"). The span of control of this new administrative body expanded rapidly.[102] After 1795, Jews were allowed to settle everywhere in the Low Countries, an option that was all the more welcome since Amsterdam's economic position had weakened considerably. In the young Kingdom, the new provincial *mediene* soon began to assert itself. No longer autonomous, however, the *kehillot* from Waalwijk to Winschoten and from Meppel to Middelharnis were ultimately ruled from The Hague.

It was the task of the Hoofdcommissie to refashion the members of the former *Joodsche Natie* into *nieuwe Nederlanders*, loyal to king and country. The fact that this policy turned out relatively effective may be partly ascribed to the trends and realities that we have tried to delineate on the previous pages. The eighteenth-century *Lokalisierung*, which expressed itself in an increasing Jewish affinity with urban and regional identities, had paved the

[99] For an example of how *Adas Yeshurun* was woven into the genealogy of Reform Judaism, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988), 25–7.

[100] Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 1–25.

[101] Michman, *Dutch Jewry*, 105–57.

[102] Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*.

way for nineteenth-century nationalization. The *Politisierung* of the tumultuous 1780s had resulted in a lasting Jewish identification with the House of Orange who, upon their return in 1813, were the driving force behind the efforts at unifying the country. In religious matters, the new *minhag Holland* reflected the unassuming moderation of eighteenth-century Halakhah and devotion.[103] This intrinsic religious temperance neatly coincided with the Dutch propensity for the *juste milieu*, an attitude that favored *Hollandse middelmaat* over the radical, the excellent, and the extreme.[104] Moderate orthodoxy, a conventional halakhic lifestyle that never interfered with full participation in gentile society, became the characteristic Dutch alternative to the Reform–orthodox controversies that evolved elsewhere in Europe. *Beschaving*, a concept adopted from Dutch Enlightened discourse, became a central focus of Dutch Jewry's civic identity.[105] Pairing personal *politesse* with collective decorum and individual piety with universal (and, ultimately, national) civilization, it served to accommodate the multiple demands of being loyal *vaderlanders* and constant Israelites in the new Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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[103] Under reference to the Portuguese Beth Haim cemetery at Ouderkerk, Ashkenazim were now allowed to apply decorations to headstones and use the Dutch vernacular, alongside Hebrew, on their epitaphs; Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*, 60–2.

[104] Ernst H. Kossmann, "Hollandse middelmaat: *De Gids* 1837–1987," in Kossmann, *Vergankelijkheid en continuïteit. Opstellen over geschiedenis* (Amsterdam, 1995), 47–59.

[105] Irene Zwiep, "Religion, Culture (and Nation) in Nineteenth-Century Dutch-Jewish thought," in Josef Kaplan and Dan Michman, eds., *The Religious Cultures of Dutch Jewry* (Leiden, 2017), 249–69.

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CHAPTER 34

THE JEWS OF FRANCE (1650–1815)

JAY R. BERKOVITZ

Since the mid twentieth century, investigation into the history of the Jews in modern France has focused overwhelmingly on the political struggle for civic equality and on the enduring effects of the Revolution. In this respect, Franco-Jewish historiography has mirrored the dominant ideology of those who first bore the title *citoyens*. Credited with having put an end to centuries of legal disability and social exclusion, the Revolution was widely conceived by the first generations after 1789 as the embodiment of the Sinaitic revelation and as the first stage in the messianic redemption. Accordingly, historians have tended to concentrate on those forces that paved the road leading to civic equality – such as *raison d'état*, the commercial revolution, and the Enlightenment – and on the challenges posed by Emancipation in the nineteenth century.[1] The latter include conflicts between religion and the modern state; social and political transformation under Napoleon and subsequent regimes; the rise of antisemitism; and new paradigms of Jewish identity. Attention to pre-revolutionary Jewish social and cultural history has since 1945 been noticeably less copious, partly due to the destruction of numerous community records during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and to the wide dispersal of archival holdings in France, Israel, and the United States after the Second World War. Until the mid twentieth century, hundreds of valuable studies on the *ancien régime* centered mainly on local and regional histories, but integrating the history of Jewish life prior to the Revolution has proven difficult.[2] The goal

[1] See, for example, Frances Malino and Bernard Wasserstein, eds., *The Jews of Modern France* (Waltham, 1984). On the disdain for the pre-revolutionary era, see Patrice Higonnet, *Goodness Beyond Virtue: Jacobins during the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 137–40.

[2] For some exceptions, see Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Princeton, 1999); Bernhard Blumenkranz, ed., *Histoire des Juifs en France* (Toulouse, 1972); Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York, 1968); Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley, 1998); and Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Les Juifs de France* (Paris, 1975). On the state of the archives, see Zosa Szajkowski, *Franco-Judaica* (New York, 1962), introduction.

of the present chapter is to sketch a coherent portrait of Jews during the *ancien régime* while making the case for greater continuity between the *ancien régime* and the post-revolutionary era. I shall argue that the transformation of French Jewry in the century following 1789 was informed by several paradigms that had emerged during the *ancien régime*: the urban–rural dichotomy; the impact of secularization; the empowerment of an urban laity that gained firm control of communal governance; and the role of religious ritual in fashioning individual and collective identities.

ATTITUDES AND POLICIES TOWARD THE JEWS DURING THE *ANCIEN RÉGIME*

Less than a century after the final expulsion of Jews from France in 1394, Louis XI encouraged foreigners to settle in Bordeaux and Bayonne by offering extensive commercial privileges and exemption from the *droit d'aubaine*, the law that entitled the government to seize the estate of a deceased foreigner. Among the newcomers were *conversos* who had left the Iberian Peninsula to escape the Inquisition. In the *lettres patentes* issued in 1550, Henri II recognized them as *nouveaux chrétiens*, and in the next two centuries, as many came to identify openly as Jews, their numbers grew to roughly 5,000. Members of the Portuguese Nation, as they preferred to be known, resided in six localities in southwest France: Bordeaux, Bayonne, Biarritz, Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Bidache, and Peyrehorade. Together, these constituted one of three leading Jewish communities in France. To the southeast, in the papal province of the Comtat Venaissin, there were about 2,500 Jews who were confined to four *carrières* ("streets, districts"): Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon, and Isle-sur-Sorgue. It was not until 1791 that these lands were formally annexed by France. In the northeast, as territories of Alsace and Lorraine came under French dominion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the number of Jews grew steadily. Following the conquest of Metz in 1552, Jews from Germany and Poland were permitted to settle in the Moselle to provide credit to local residents and to the military garrison. Three years after the territory of the bishoprics came under French control (1595), Henri IV issued privileges guaranteeing the public practice of Judaism. With a population of nearly 3,000 individuals comprising 7 percent of the total population of the city, the Metz *kehillah* became the largest Jewish community in France prior to the Revolution. Collaboration between Jewish purveyors and the military, particularly in the provision of horses for the cavalry, expanded to the Upper Rhine valley during the Thirty Years' War and contributed to the steady increase in the Jewish population in Alsace. By the end of the century,

leading advisors to Louis XIV had steered the king away from parochial Christian interests that had, until then, dominated royal policy. Colbert, in particular, was confident that the economic benefit that Jews provided to the state far outweighed the grievances of local merchants. Immigration from eastern Europe swelled the ranks of the Jewish population in the early eighteenth century, and by 1784 there were nearly 20,000 Jews in Alsace and 5,000 in the duchy of Lorraine. Smaller communities formed in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, and Nîmes, but most regions of France, and many large cities such as Strasbourg, excluded Jews entirely.[3] In view of the foregoing geographical and cultural fragmentation, one clearly cannot speak of "French Jews" until the post-revolutionary era.

Settlement patterns in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries highlight the unevenness that characterized attitudes toward the Jews in the early modern era. Territorial annexation was the most immediate factor accounting for the growth of the Jewish population in France, but the claim that the economic utility of the Jews called for a reconsideration of medieval policies was equally significant. Privileges permitting Jews, *qua nouveaux chrétiens*, to remain in Bordeaux and pursue their livelihood depended on the often-conflicting interests of the monarchy, the Bordeaux *parlement*, and the local merchant guilds. Aiming to stimulate the economy, the kings extended protection to the Portuguese merchants and permitted them to settle in ports and in other towns of the southwest and to engage freely in commerce. Cardinal Richelieu's efforts to halt proceedings against *conversos* charged with Judaizing epitomize the importance attached by the crown to the new policy.[4] On other occasions, however, the monarchy reversed itself, as in 1615, when Louis XIII demanded that all Jews, converted or not, leave France. This edict was issued in deference to local Bordelaise merchants who objected to the competition posed by the newcomers. Consistently supportive of the Portuguese population, the local *parlement* fought the royal edict and prevented its ratification. Later in the century, the devastating economic downturn resulting from the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) induced a more favorable policy toward the Jews. In 1723, Louis XV issued

[3] Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment*, 19–28; Georges Weil, "Recherches sur la démographie des juifs d'Alsace du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue des Études Juives* 130 (1971), 53–5; Zosa Szajkowski, "Demographic Aspects of Jewish Emancipation in France during the French Revolution," *Historia Judaica* 21 (1959), 7–36; Marianne Calmann, *The Carrière of Carpentras* (Oxford, 1984); Peter Sahlins, *Unnaturally French: Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After* (Ithaca, NY, 2004).

[4] See Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (Oxford, 1989), 116–18.

lettres patentes that formally recognized the *nouveaux chrétiens*, for the first time, as the Jews they actually were.[5] Members of the Portuguese Nation were henceforth permitted to purchase and lease land. By mid-century, the Jews of Bordeaux had become conspicuous in banking, the grain trade and chocolate production, maritime trade, and in shipbuilding. In Bayonne, Jews imported wool and gold and were active in the silk and wine trades. As a rule, vigorous resistance to Jewish membership in the guilds prevailed almost everywhere in France, except in Bordeaux and to a lesser extent in Bayonne, where Jews were excluded from the chocolate makers' guild.[6]

The positive effects of this policy invariably generated tensions between Jews and their Christian neighbors. From early in the seventeenth century, local merchants had voiced displeasure with Jewish competition, and, following the establishment of the Metz *parlement* in 1633, Jews in the Moselle region found themselves positioned precariously between competing royal and local policy interests. Reporting on regional conditions in 1697, royal Intendant Jacques Etienne Turgot lauded the impressive achievements of Metz's Jewish merchants. They constituted "a kind of republic and neutral nation," which enabled them to travel with ease and transport merchandise across national boundaries. But he also noted local complaints concerning their unfair advantage in procuring merchandise without delay and their readiness to sell at lower prices. The growing number of Jews and their commercial success prompted some local authorities to advocate the curtailment of continued Jewish settlement in the region; however, due to their crucial role in supplying the army with food and horses, many were granted special privileges by the crown.[7] But until the Revolution, the vast majority of Jews in the northeastern provinces were limited by imperial decree to moneylending, trading in old clothes, and cattle dealing. They suffered humiliating legal disabilities such as the *péage corporel* ("body tax"), and in some areas they were periodically required to wear yellow hats and to pay the notorious Brancas tax, which was intended as a protection duty. In Metz, as in Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin, ghetto restrictions persisted through the end of the *ancien régime*.

In Bordeaux, and in the rural localities of Bidache, Pehrehorade, and Labastide-Clairence, residential Jewish areas were concentrated in a few

[5] See Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment*, 78–112; Frances Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux: Assimilation and Emancipation in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France* (Tuscaloosa, 1978), 1–22.

[6] Gérard Nahon, "From New Christians to the Portuguese Jewish Nation in France," in Haim Beinart, *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardic Legacy*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1992), II, 336–64.

[7] See Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment*, 20–1.

streets, but no separate Jewish quarter was established. More severe was the policy in Bayonne, which did not permit Jews to reside in the city at all; they therefore all lived in Saint-Esprit on the right bank of the Adour River. The question whether the Jews were legally subject to the *droit d'aubaine* was debated throughout the eighteenth century, and even in Bordeaux repeated efforts to apply this law to the Jewish population ceased only by order of the local *parlement* in 1758. In the Papal States, Jews lived in crowded, dilapidated hovels, were subjected to harsh taxation, and were also required to wear yellow hats. Accusations of ritual murder still had credibility, as in the case of a Jew from Boulay who was burned to death in 1670 for the alleged murder of a Christian child.[8] For Christian theologians, the wretched condition of the Jews furnished proof of divine rejection. In order to curb their harmful influence, many communities in the northeast and southwest required Jews to attend sermons in church on a regular basis. But far-reaching regulations that severely prohibited social and economic contact between Christians and Jews in Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin, such as those that were enacted in 1725 by the Holy See, were in all likelihood honored only in the breach.[9] Owing to the special circumstances of their settlement, there were no explicit laws limiting contact with Christians in Bordeaux and Bayonne, nor were there restrictions on economic activities that were at all comparable to the limitations imposed in Alsace and Lorraine.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF JEWISH LIFE

Jewish life in early modern France was organized, as elsewhere, around the self-governing communal structure known as the *kehillah*. Each community established modes of acceptable social and religious conduct that were recorded as by-laws (*takkanot*) in the communal register. Their purpose was to maintain social and economic equilibrium, to preserve correct relations with government authorities and the neighboring gentile population, and to prevent the deterioration of religious and moral values. Toward these ends, communal legislation defined the right of permanent

[8] Zosa Szajkowski, "The Jewish Status in Eighteenth-Century France and the *'Droit d'Aubaine,'* *Historia Judaica* 19 (1957), 147–61; Szajkowski, *The Economic Status of the Jews in Alsace and Lorraine* (New York, 1954), 28–71; Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment*, 34, 54–63, 249–65.

[9] Pierre-André Meyer, *La Communauté juive de Metz au XVIIIe siècle* (Nancy, 1993); Szajkowski, "Population Problems of Marranos and Sephardim," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 27 (1958), 83–103; S. Posener, "The Social Life of the Jewish Communities in France in the Eighteenth Century," *Jewish Social Studies* 7 (1945), 271–326.

residence, determined appointment procedures for communal officials and functionaries, and imposed taxes. Despite these common characteristics, regional variations depended on the degree of integration into the surrounding general society, on the range of authority granted by the state, and on the impact of ethnic-cultural traditions. In the southwestern communities, where the aristocratic tradition of the Iberian Peninsula was much in evidence, authority was concentrated in a small group of wealthy merchants and bankers. But the autocratic regime of the Nation also emerged from the specific circumstances surrounding the establishment of these communities. Because most of the earliest immigrant families were poor, the wealthier among them paid taxes on their behalf and emerged as the Nation's legal representatives. Dissident members of the community fiercely opposed their autocratic style and demanded representation in the leadership body, but the king upheld the authority of the more established leaders. Similar disputes in Saint-Esprit-lès-Bayonne disrupted communal affairs for much of the century, but the royal authority stood behind the official administration of the Nation there as well.[10]

Self-governance in southern France had its roots in the collection of community charitable funds, known in Bordeaux as *Sedaca* and as *Hebera* in Bayonne. By the turn of the eighteenth century, these benevolent societies became fully developed communal organizations that resembled Ashkenazic *kehillot*, albeit with two important differences. First, in contrast to communities in Alsace-Lorraine, where rabbis were entrenched in leadership positions from the beginning, the rabbinate as a communal institution in Bordeaux and Bayonne dated only from the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The authority of rabbis in the southwestern communities was subordinated to the lay syndics in every area outside the narrowly defined ritual sphere.[11] Second, the communities in Bordeaux and Bayonne did not enjoy exclusive jurisdiction over civil cases involving Jews. Bordeaux's rabbinic court (*bet din*), which started to function in the 1740s, typically heard cases concerning marriage, divorce, and certification of ritual slaughterers; civil and criminal disputes were settled by arbitration before syndics who alone were authorized to serve in this capacity. But in the absence of governmental authorization to enforce their jurisdiction in civil affairs, recourse to French courts could not be prevented. Sephardic

[10] See Simon Schwarzfuchs, ed., *Le Registre des délibérations de la Nation Juive Portugaise de Bordeaux (1711–1787)* (Paris, 1981), introduction, 9–13, and no. 279; Zosa Szajkowski, "Conflicts within the Eighteenth-Century Sephardic Communities of France," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 31 (1960), 167–80.

[11] See *Registre des délibérations*, nos. 62, 85, 121, and 437.

communities resorted to various forms of social pressure and moral suasion to maintain control over civil disputes, but these efforts were not generally successful.[12]

In Alsace, Lorraine, and Metz, electoral and administrative procedures rested on a broader foundation than in the southern communities, though eligibility requirements for communal office in Metz, especially, became ever more exclusionary over the course of the century.[13] In Alsace, where communities were much smaller, syndics were generally elected by universal male suffrage. Whichever process was followed, the election required confirmation by both the provincial organization and the local *intendant*. At the administrative helm of a typical Alsatian community sat an elected council, headed by a rabbi, which exercised a range of punitive powers that included fines, the public announcement of wrongdoings, and the right to deny religious honors. More serious offenses, such as fraud, slander, or violations of sexual morality, were punishable by the communal ban (*ḥerem*). Throughout most of the *ancien régime*, the Alsatian rabbinate enjoyed considerable authority in local community and regional affairs, as in Lorraine where the *av bet din* (head of the rabbinic court) was authorized to enforce his own judgments or those of another court, and to "publicize, prohibit, fine, and pronounce the *ḥerem*." This contrasted sharply with conditions in Metz, where the rabbis were largely subordinate to lay officials.[14] According to the terms of the rabbinic contract offered to R. Abraham Broda in 1708, the Metz rabbinic court head was required to lend his formal assent to communal legislation meant to curb immorality and was also barred from issuing the *ḥerem* without communal authorization.[15] After mid-century, the functions of *dayan* ("rabbinic court judge") and syndic were formally rendered incompatible by communal law – a decision that effectively excluded rabbis from communal government. Indeed, rabbinic appointments offer the clearest evidence of lay control. In Alsace, a decided preference to hire natives of the region invariably led to

[12] On the Bayonne community, see Nahon, "From New Christians to the Portuguese Jewish Nation," 348–52; on Bordeaux, see Nahon, "Note sur les registres des délibérations de la nation juive portugaise de Bordeaux 1710–1790," *Revue des Études Juives* 129 (1970), 239–43.

[13] See Abraham Cahen, "Règlements somptuaires de la communauté juive de Metz à la fin du XVIIe siècle," *Annuaire de la Société des études juives* 1 (1881), 77–129.

[14] For the contract offered to R. Nehemiah Reischer of Nancy, see Simon Schwarzfuchs, "Three Documents from the Jewish Communities in Alsace-Lorraine" [Hebrew], *Michael* 4 (1976), 12; also see Jay Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650–1860* (Philadelphia, 2004), ch. 1.

[15] For an example of acquiescence to lay authority by Broda's successor, R. Jacob Reischer, who recognized the judicial authority of lay courts and the jurisdiction of lay judges in matters of personal property, see *Resp. Shevut Yaakov*, (Offenbach, 1711), pt. 2, no. 143, and pt. 1, no. 136.

commercial entanglements, corruption at the highest levels of communal leadership, and the sullying of rabbinic prestige. The Metz *kehillah*, for its part, restricted eligibility for the position of *av bet din* to men with no local family ties in the hope that this would free the chief rabbinate from the strain of special interests.[16]

Jurisdiction over civil disputes represented the area of greatest rabbinic influence in Ashkenazic communal affairs. Until the mid eighteenth century, governmental authorities recognized the exclusive jurisdiction of rabbinic courts in civil and religious affairs, and under the terms set forth in these privileges, communities enjoyed the right to establish courts and to appoint their own judges. Rabbinic courts heard a wide range of cases that included civil and criminal law, inheritance, guardianship, marriage, divorce, and communal legislation. In the estimation of rabbinic and communal leaders, these courts represented the only legitimate venue for the adjudication of civil cases. It was only in the early modern era, however, that rabbinic courts were formally established as communal institutions empowered to adjudicate commercial disputes. Nevertheless, by the late seventeenth century, the exclusive civil jurisdiction of these tribunals was challenged regularly by individuals who preferred to resolve their disputes in the general courts.[17] In 1715, new *lettres patentes* firmly upheld the authority of rabbis and communal leaders to judge civil cases, but in 1734 the Metz parlement limited the jurisdiction of the *bet din* to cases where the parties agreed voluntarily to submit to arbitration and curtailed the right to impose the *ḥerem* and other disciplinary measures.[18] In the following decade, the parlement demanded that the community furnish an abridged translation of the *Ḥoshen Mishpat* ("civil law") and *Even ha-Ezer* ("family law") sections of the *Shulḥan Arukh* so that French courts could judge cases involving Jewish litigants. R. Jonathan Eibeschütz cooperated, despite his objections to *kehillah* legislation permitting recourse to French courts when both parties were in agreement or when the disagreement pertained to a bill of exchange.[19] Rabbinic jurisdiction over civil disputes in Alsace

[16] See Georges Weill, "Rabbins et Parnassim dans l'Alsace du XVIIIe siècle," in Myriam Yardeni, ed., *Les Juifs dans l'histoire de France* (Leiden, 1980), 96–109.

[17] See Abraham Cahen, "Le Rabbinat de Metz pendant la période française," *Revue des Études Juives* 7 (1883), 103–7, 215–16; 8 (1884), 257–8.

[18] For challenges to the civil jurisdiction of the rabbis, see ibid., 8 (1884), 257–8, 262–6.

[19] See Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, FMe 139, for a fragment of the Pinkas ha-Kahal of Metz stating that certain types of notes could be litigated in non-Jewish courts, clearly because the fact that the debtor owed the creditor a certain sum was not a matter of dispute. The French translation was titled *Receuil des lois, coutumes et usages observés par les juifs de Metz* (1743). On its historical background and context, see Jordan Katz, "'To Judge and to Be Judged': Jewish Communal Autonomy in Metz and

encountered fewer challenges, evidently due to the cultural insularity of the rural countryside and to the historically strong support of the monarchy for Jewish communities that had formed along the Upper and Lower Rhine valley during the Thirty Years' War. The monarchy looked favorably upon the autonomous powers of the new communities because of the advantages for its tax-collecting efforts, and each king, from Henri III to Louis XVI, confirmed these powers and the authority of rabbis to judge in civil disputes.[20]

Rabbinic courts naturally ruled in accordance with the talmudic and halakhic tradition, but as community institutions they were required to remain in full compliance with communal by-laws (*takkanot ha-kahal*).[21] This hierarchy of laws signaled the supremacy of the lay leadership. With the expanded scope of communal legislation that was issued in relation to consumption, sexual immorality, and the insubordination of youth, the impact of lay empowerment was even more apparent. In each of these areas, Alsace and Metz epitomized two distinct frameworks, in which the encounter between tradition and modernity varied substantially. They also prefigured the two divergent social contexts – rural and urban – that determined how Ashkenazic Jews would interpret the diverse implications of Emancipation in the nineteenth century. In Metz, a powerful urban laity asserted its authority over the rabbinate by legislating standards of moral and religious behavior that were inspired by an abiding concern for social order. That the authority of the Metz laws rested on overtly secular arguments rather than on the rhetoric of religious tradition may be taken as further proof of lay encroachment on rabbinic hegemony. Although the immediate impetus for the Metz sumptuary laws was the severe economic downturn during the War of the Grand Alliance (1689–97), the main objective was emblematic of the growing regulation of public behavior in the early modern period. Unlike medieval sumptuary law, which was motivated by the fear that ostentation might arouse resentment among the neighboring gentile population, early modern regulations came in response to new challenges posed by the increasing density of urban life. In an era of dynamic social and cultural change, Metz sumptuary legislation reinforced social divisions based on age, gender, and wealth, and

the Struggle for Sovereignty in Eighteenth-Century France" (undergraduate thesis, Columbia University, 2011), and Jay R. Berkovitz, *Protocols of Justice: The Rabbinic Court of Metz, 1771–1789*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2014), I, 17–18, 50. For Eibeschütz's opposition to litigation in non-Jewish courts, see *Urim ve-Tumim, Hoshen Mishpat* (Altona, 1763), no. 26.

[20] See Isidor Loeb, "Les Juifs de Strasbourg depuis 1349 jusqu'à la Révolution," *Annuaire de la Société des études juives* 2 (1883), 166.

[21] See Berkovitz, *Protocols of Justice*, I, esp. ch. 2, and II, passim.

sought to maintain internal equilibrium in the face of acute generational tensions, the erosion of sexual mores, and the blurring of class distinctions. But beyond Metz, the enactment of sumptuary laws was a rarity. The high level of acculturation attained by the Sephardic population made this legislation unnecessary. In the predominantly rural economy of Alsace, where neither consumption nor class division was in the forefront of concern, the legislative agenda was more narrowly focused than in Metz: communal officials worked vigorously to preserve traditional norms and toward that end made determined efforts to strengthen rabbinic authority.[22] By all indications, the penetration of cultural influences from the Alsatian countryside was relatively modest and the population remained largely traditional in its religious behavior.

As traditional barriers separating Jews and non-Jews began to fall after mid-century, communal leaders responded with new efforts to slow the pace of acculturation. In Alsace, ordinances approved by several regional assemblies a dozen years prior to the Revolution reveal uneasiness about the growing influence of village culture and the potentially harmful impact of modern trends on religious and moral conduct. Certain *charivari* that had become popular were outlawed, as was dancing by men and women together.[23] Efforts to forestall the erosion of traditional norms in Metz proved less effective. Games of leisure and chance had become so popular that any person found engaged in these pastimes without the authorization of the community council could be barred from attending synagogue for three years. Paternity suits and extra-marital pregnancies were routinely recorded in the communal register and in the protocols of the *bet din*, and the repeated condemnation of extravagance over the course of the eighteenth century suggests that these trends were on the rise. Echoing the

[22] See Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, MA, 1996); Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York, 1996). On the Metz laws, see Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages*, 39–48. In Bordeaux, restrictions on jewelry and embroidered fabrics were issued for a short time, but no comparable measures were enacted in Bayonne; see Henri Léon, *Histoire des Juifs de Bayonne* (Paris, 1893), 387. It should be noted that Léon's report of an unsuccessful attempt by R. Raphael Meldola to enact sumptuary legislation in Bayonne is based on a misreading of Meldola, *Resp. Mayyim Rabbim* (Amsterdam, 1737), no. 64. I am grateful to R. Joseph Prager for bringing this to my attention. Although the community of Carpentras issued a series of sumptuary laws in the first half of the eighteenth century, these measures exemplified the pre-modern paradigm of controls roused by religious, moral, and political concerns. See Cecil Roth, "Sumptuary Laws of the Community of Carpentras," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 18 (1927–8), 357–83.

[23] For a detailed summary of one meeting, see Isidore Loeb, "Extrait du protocole de la nation de l'assemblée du 21 Iyyar 5537," in "Les Juifs de Strasbourg," 181–98.

pledge made by R. Eibeschütz in 1744 to insert a clause in the betrothal contract prohibiting physical contact until after the wedding, Metz communal legislation barred affianced couples from spending time in each other's company at night, even in the presence of a chaperone. In a similar vein, Metz leaders aimed to reduce social interaction between men and women by designating separate days for annual cemetery visits, a provision that evinced unease about the participation of women in public ritual.[24] Misgivings about the unruliness of youth prompted rigorous measures aiming to prevent delinquency; ordinances that barred youths from moving beyond Jewish streets on the Sabbath and festivals reveal still greater anxiety about the behavior of unmarried men and women.[25] In the area of litigation, R. Eibeschütz conceded in the 1740s that it was impossible to stop members of the Metz community from approaching the French civil courts because the trend had already become so widespread.[26]

In addition to containing signs of social and religious deviation, the proceedings of the Metz rabbinic court offer striking evidence of acculturation and integration decades prior to the conferral of civic equality. More so in France than elsewhere, widely applied judicial procedures imposed on minority populations such as the Jews an inextricable attachment to state and society, through the internalization of norms of legal culture as these related to commerce, torts, family, and inheritance. Accordingly, the application of talmudic law in eighteenth-century Metz entailed familiarity with royal legislation and local ordinances, as is apparent in two discrete areas: the routinization of civil procedures in the *bet din*, and the navigation of overlapping jurisdictions as defined by the Jewish and French justice systems. The Jews of Metz met the challenges of legal pluralism by accommodating to French civil law and its structures and by acknowledging the interdependence of cases brought before the *bet din* and in the French civil court system. This involved the reinterpretation of talmudic law, especially as understood in medieval codes and commentaries, and its application to novel conditions. Decades before the Jewish population of France was admitted to citizenship, there emerged new rules of

[24] For details, see the 1769 *règlement*, arts. 43–4, 62; and Eibeschütz, *Ya'arot Devash* (Metz, 1789; rev. edn., Jerusalem, 1984, 2 vols.) pt. 1, 19, 37, 42, 61–2, 231, and 240. On women as a source of disorder, see James Farr, *Authority and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1995), 19–31.

[25] See Abraham Cahen, "Enseignement obligatoire édicté par la communauté israélite de Metz," *Revue des Études Juives* 2 (1881), 303–5. On the 1769 laws, see Samuel Kerner, "Le Règlement de la communauté de Metz de 1769," *Annales de l'Est* 24 (1972), 210–53.

[26] See Frances Malino, "Competition and Confrontation: The Jews and the *Parlement of* Metz," in G. Dahan, ed., *Les Juifs au regard de l'histoire: mélanges en l'honneur de Bernhard Blumenkranz* (Paris, 1985), 327–41; and Berkovitz, *Protocols of Justice*, passim.

engagement between the Jewish minority in Metz and the surrounding society and culture.[27]

Patterns of religious observance in the *ancien régime* offer an important perspective on the urban–rural divide and shed light on regional variations relating to ethnic and cultural identity. Two principal modes of ritual observance – rites of passage and commemorative rites – provide *entrée* into underlying structures of thought, especially with respect to *mentalités individuelles* and *identités collectives*. Rites of passage invariably incorporated elements of folk religion that Jews shared with their non-Jewish neighbors – a phenomenon that has been studied, until recently, mainly by cultural anthropologists.[28] Commemorative rituals, while focusing on the recurring themes of deliverance and destruction, re-enacted the great stories and central messages of the Jewish tradition. For members of the Portuguese Nation, the practice of religion in the seventeenth century bore traces of the anxiety that was attendant to their secret identity as Jews. Until the first decade of the eighteenth century, they registered baptisms, marriages, and deaths with the local parish, and Catholic priests administered their ceremonies. Prayers, recited in Spanish, with interspersion of Hebrew terms, were held clandestinely. The first indications of more openly Jewish observance were evident in 1659 in tombstone inscriptions containing the months of the Jewish calendar, in Labastide-Clairence, and in Bayonne at the end of the century.[29] In the absence of institutions of advanced Jewish learning, rabbis and lower religious functionaries were typically sent abroad for their training, as the travels of the Attias family of Bidache attest.

Popular religious culture in Alsace and Lorraine mirrored folkways that were commonly observed in most Ashkenazic communities. Frequently, these were protective rites that developed in response to the stresses and strains of daily life. In the early modern era, such traditions coalesced in due course with biblical, midrashic, and halakhic sources.[30] The fusion of elite and popular religion was doubtless advanced by the wider availability of printed texts, as attested by the example of prayer books published in eighteenth-century Metz. A vital agent of culture, the printed prayer book promoted ritual literacy, and embodied, if not shaped, the spiritual worldview of Jews in the region. Metz prayer books typically included selections

[27] Jay R. Berkovitz, "Acculturation and Integration in Eighteenth-Century Metz," *Jewish History* 24, 3–4 (2010), 271–94.

[28] Arnold Van Gennep, *Manuel de folklore français contemporain* (Paris, 1943).

[29] See Nahon, "From New Christians to the Portuguese Jewish Nation," 341–3.

[30] See, for example, Freddy Raphaël, "Rites de naissance et medecine populaire dans le judaïsme rural d'Alsace," *Revue de la société d'ethnographie française* 1 (1971), 83–94.

from the *regimen vitae* literature detailing kabbalistic customs ascribed to Isaac Luria, including ritual immersion prior to the Sabbath, weekly study of the Zohar, and supplicatory prayers commonly recited during rites of passage. The inclusion of instructions for the performance of penitential ceremonies at the start of the Jewish New Year, despite rabbinic opposition, calls attention to the enduring appeal of popular culture throughout Ashkenaz.[31]

The investigation of religious ritual in the northeastern provinces has also proven indispensable for mapping the cultural orbit to which the Jewish population belonged and in clarifying the relative force of local and regional traditions. Throughout most of the two centuries prior to 1789, the rhythms of Jewish life in Alsace-Lorraine were largely consistent with the patterns of traditional Ashkenazic culture that prevailed in central Europe. Modes of Talmud study, rabbinic peregrinations and appointments, and marriage patterns indicate that, toward the end of the *ancien régime*, the area stretching from Metz in the west to Prague in the east was still a unified cultural entity where the traditions of western Ashkenaz, as distinct from those of Poland–Lithuania, were dominant. Liturgical rites confirm that the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine viewed themselves both as part of the broader heritage of western Ashkenaz and as adherents of a vibrant local tradition. A close examination of patterns of ritual observance reveals that the cultural history of the Jews in Alsace-Lorraine oscillated between two competing expressions, one regional and the other local. Although the eastern provinces of France were undeniably part of the larger cultural universe of Ashkenaz, signs of an indigenous Jewish culture persisted. Local traditions tended to dominate more in rural Alsatian communities, whereas in Metz a pan-Ashkenazic ethos was equally represented. Jewish communities in southern France staunchly preserved their own liturgical and ritual traditions, as did Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon, and Isle-sur-Sorgue. It was only in 1776 that a unified ritual was produced for the four communities. Several local Purims were instituted by communities in the Comtat Venaissin to commemorate their deliverance from danger.[32]

Rites of remembrance also evinced the allure of Ashkenazic culture in the broadest sense, though typically with a local variation. With the

[31] See *Seder Tefilah ke-Minhag Ashkenaz* (Metz, 1765), pt. 2, 125b.

[32] Modeled on the national Purim celebration, local Purims were instituted to commemorate deliverance from a danger that threatened either an individual family or an entire community. See the *maḥzor* for Rosh Hashanah, rite of Carpentras (1695): Calmann, *Carrière of Carpentras*, 154. On local Purims, see Yosef H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982), 46–8.

pronouncement that "[all] communities are united as one person," the Metz community's adoption of a memorial prayer for Polish Jews murdered in the Khmelnytsky massacres affirmed the sense of intercommunal unity that pervaded Jewish consciousness. Recited biannually in conjunction with the memorial for victims of the Crusades, the prayer conflated the two catastrophes into a single rite of remembrance.[33] But the integration of broader patterns of Ashkenazic culture into the local consciousness could be a source of tension. Although collections of prayers published in Metz in the 1760s included the standard components of the western Ashkenazic liturgical tradition,[34] some Metz residents, especially synagogue officials, stubbornly upheld the supremacy of local tradition while rejecting any modifications to local practice. Copious notations in the Metz prayer books indicated where local customs diverged from the Frankfurt, Polish, and Amsterdam rites, and detailed instructions guided the worshipper in the order of liturgical poems (*piyyutim*) observed locally. Over four decades, beginning in the revolutionary era, R. Aaron Worms of Metz boldly asserted the primacy of western Ashkenazic rites in opposition to customs that had originated on Polish soil and had gained prominence during the preceding two centuries. His efforts to reclaim the western tradition to which Alsace-Lorraine had maintained strong historic ties corresponded to the emergence of the Jewish community of France as culturally distinct from those of the east.[35]

EMANCIPATION

The role played by the Enlightenment in paving the road to Jewish Emancipation remains no less controversial today than it was five decades ago when Arthur Hertzberg published *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*. Hertzberg indicted those *philosophes*, most notably Voltaire, who lent respectability to Jew-hatred and, later, to modern antisemitism. They were highly critical of the social behavior and economic practices of the Jews, and looked disdainfully at their cultural legacy. There is little disagreement about the substance of Voltaire's criticism. He vilified the tribalism of biblical Judaism, rejected its separatist tendencies, and condemned Jewish

[33] The elegy, titled *Baqashah* (Amsterdam, 1699), was composed by Moses Cohen Narol, a refugee from Poland who was appointed head of the Metz rabbinic court in 1649.

[34] The titles of the two prayer books bore this out: *Seder Tefilah ke-Minhag Ashkenaz* [Order of Prayers According to the Ashkenazic Rite] (Metz, 1765), and *Mahzor ke-Minhag Ashkenaz u-Folin* [Prayers According to the Ashkenazic and Polish Rite] (Metz, 1768).

[35] See Cahen, "Rabbinat," *Revue des Études Juives* 12 (1886), 294–5. On Metz synagogue customs and on the views of Aaron Worms, see Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages*, 59–85.

"customs which are exactly the opposite of sociable."[36] Other, more sympathetic voices, as exemplified by Montesquieu, understood Jewish failings to have resulted from centuries of mistreatment and persecution. Optimism about the possibility of regenerating the Jews, which included demands that they surrender elements of their religious, social, and cultural distinctiveness, helped to shape the public discourse that eventually favored the conferral of citizenship upon them.

Recent scholarship has contested the claim that the views of the *philosophes* can be categorized as either "antisemitic" or "philosemitic." In Ronald Schechter's reading, the *philosophes* cared about the tiny Jewish population because it was used profitably to advance discussions on the nature of citizenship and the qualities of the ideal citizen. Portrayed as dishonest and disloyal, the Jews embodied, according to their critics, a corporate particularism that was incompatible with the values of citizenship. The eighteenth-century debate, which arose out of a clear tension between universal human values on the one hand and toleration of distinct values on the other, considered whether modern society could accommodate "a minority that appeared profoundly unassimilable to its logic," to borrow Adam Sutcliffe's formulation.[37] Even those who demanded improvement in the legal status of the Jews did not disagree that they were devoid of virtue, as abbé Henri Grégoire made clear in the prize-winning essay he originally submitted to the Metz Royal Academy of Sciences in 1785. He conceded that the Jews were degenerate and depraved, and, in fact, as Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall has shown, leading French *maskilim* challenged Grégoire's anti-Jewish prejudices. Nevertheless, he insisted that, despite these disabilities, they could be regenerated morally and physically. What distinguished Grégoire, Mirabeau, and others from detractors of the Jews was the assumption that their miserable condition was the product of centuries of persecution and that this could all be reversed by new legislation, policing, education, military service, access to trades and professions, and the cancelation of debts owed by Christians. This view of Emancipation rested upon an abiding faith in the capacity of the Revolution to create a new man with exceptional virtue, but it was

[36] See Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment*, 45–8, 268–313; Harvey Chisick, "Ethics and History in Voltaire's Attitude toward the Jews," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35 (2002), 577–600; and Adam Sutcliffe, "Can a Jew Be a *Philosophe*? Isaac de Pinto, Voltaire, and Jewish Participation in the European Enlightenment," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (2000), 31–51; Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* (Paris, 1990), I, ciii; II, 64.

[37] Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815* (Berkeley, 2003), esp. 87–8; Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003).

unclear whether the new universalism could tolerate the distinctive culture of a minority such as the Jews.[38]

Echoing enlightened absolutist policies in central Europe, the French monarchy had its own plan for the Jews. Two new pieces of legislation issued in 1784 by Louis XVI abolished the body tax and granted Alsatian Jews freedom to engage in commerce and trades, but several months later restrictions were imposed on the growth of the Jewish population and on its involvement in moneylending. Beginning in the late 1770s, there were rising tensions relating to the role of Jews in the economy. In 1777–8, thousands of forged receipts were circulated in Alsace in order to defraud Jewish lenders of their rightful payments. Although the Sovereign Council of Alsace confirmed that the debts owed to Jewish lenders were still outstanding, and notwithstanding the fact that those responsible for the forgeries were convicted and brought to justice, there was great popular support for François Hell, who masterminded the scheme, and for the pamphlet he published to justify his allegations.[39] In spite of the widely recognized need for credit, the Jews' preponderance in moneylending had come to be viewed in the rural countryside as a sign of avarice and a symbol of the religious enmity that divided Jews and Christians.

Even following the overthrow of the monarchy, no clear path to the conferral of citizenship upon the Jews emerged. The *cahiers* of 1789 showed little sympathy for the plight of the Jews, and numerous deputies to the Constituent Assembly denounced them for their purported alien culture and social exclusiveness. In a speech delivered to the Assembly in December 1789, using words that later became emblematic of the predicament of Jewish Emancipation, Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre declared:

> We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals. We must withdraw recognition from their judges; they should only have our judges. We must refuse legal protection to the maintenance of the so-called laws of their Judaic organization; they should not be allowed to form in the state either a political body or an order. They must be citizens individually. But, some will say to me, they do not want to be citizens. Well then! If they do not want to be citizens, they should say so, and then, we should banish them. It is repugnant

[38] Mona Ozouf, "Regeneration," in François Furet and Mona Ozouf, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 779–90; Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley, 2005); and Sepinwall, "Strategic Friendships: Jewish Intellectuals, the Abbé Grégoire, and the French Revolution," in Ross Brann and Adam Sutcliffe, eds., *Renewing the Past, Reconfiguring Jewish Culture: From Al-Andalus to the Haskalah* (Philadelphia, 2004), 189–212.

[39] On the false receipts affair, see Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 67–73.

to have in the state an association of non-citizens, and a nation within the nation.[40]

A firm proponent of individual liberty, Clermont-Tonnerre demanded the surrender of Jewish autonomy, especially a separate Jewish judiciary, as a precondition of citizenship. By "nation" he meant "corporation" in its pre-revolutionary sense, and, as long as Jews remained "a nation within a nation," they would fail to discharge the duties of citizenship. This perspective located Jewish Emancipation squarely within the spirit of the Revolution, and, in so doing, placed the Sephardic Jews of the southwest, with their distinct historical experience, on an independent footing. The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux and Bayonne proceeded to petition the Assembly on their own, and were awarded citizenship in January 1790, and the Jews of Avignon were included as well. Granting citizenship to the Ashkenazic Jews of northeastern France was far more complicated, especially insofar as it raised concerns about the ability of these Jews to form a genuine attachment to the *patrie* and its citizens. Questions ranging from their religious practices and sociocultural ethos to their ability to integrate within the economy were at the forefront of the debate. It was not until September 1791, once Ashkenazic leaders agreed to surrender communal autonomy, including the right to adjudicate civil cases, that the Assembly, under the presidency of the abbé Grégoire, voted them into citizenship.

From the start, the Jews of France viewed themselves as *enfants de la patrie*, to borrow Lorraine syndic Berr Isaac Berr's phrase. In fact, even before they were admitted to citizenship, the Jews identified enthusiastically with the fledgling republic. In Paris, about 100 individuals – 20 percent of the community – joined the National Guard in 1789, and others helped to thwart royalist attacks in the early 1790s. However, the bestowal of citizenship upon the Jews met with substantial resistance. Shortly after the storming of the Bastille, anti-Jewish riots broke out in twenty Alsatian communities, and violence continued into the autumn months. The widespread confiscation of property and the economic downturn in the aftermath of the Revolution brought financial ruin to many wealthy Jewish families in Alsace and Lorraine, and during the Reign of Terror the situation deteriorated even further. Most synagogues and *yeshivot* were closed, cemeteries were desecrated, Torah scrolls were publicly burned, ritual slaughter and circumcision were prohibited, and Sabbath observance was punished as a criminal offense. While the situation was not nearly as acute in the southern communities, Jews did suffer there as well. Neither

[40] *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. Lynn Hunt (Boston, 1996), 86–8.

were instances of discrimination at all uncommon in the early 1790s. Following the passage of the law of citizenship, the Strasbourg municipality did not permit Jews to take the civil oath until a full four months had elapsed, and in Bischeim a group of Jews were prevented from voting in the local election by the mayor. The right to settle in numerous towns, such as Habsheim, Sierentz, Bischheim-au-Saum, Winzenheim, and Lingolsheim, was also challenged by the local population. In Haguenau, the Jewish community was required to provide military lodging as a condition of gaining citizenship and continued to suffer the indignity of the *péage corporel*, at least until 1796.[41]

In the aftermath of the Revolution, the Jews of the northeast found themselves in the throes of an acute communal crisis that slowed the pace of modernization and left its mark on Jewish life for much of the nineteenth century. Schools, synagogues, and rabbinic courts closed, as did the two leading Hebrew presses (in Metz and Lunéville). In response to deteriorating conditions in Alsace-Lorraine, an entire generation of *yeshiva* students and rabbis left the region and emigrated to Germany. In Haguenau, Hegenheim, Metz, and Mutzig, the rabbinate remained vacant until 1808, and with the emigration of many *maskilim*, Jewish communities were deprived of individuals who might otherwise have spearheaded educational and synagogue reform. As a result of these developments, the first generation of emancipated Jewry failed to transform its commitment to *régénération* into a concrete program of action. Compared to developments in central Europe, modernization in France was exceedingly slow: no modern Jewish schools were established until the early years of the Bourbon Restoration, and even two decades after the Revolution, less than 10 percent of Jewish children in Alsace attended public schools, as compared to only a slightly higher proportion in Lorraine.[42] Movement away from petty trade and moneylending was very modest, and no sustained encouragement of economic productivity can be discerned until

[41] See Michael Graetz, "Jewish Economic Activity Between War and Peace: The Rise and Fall of Jewish Army Suppliers" [Hebrew], *Zion* 56 (1991), 255–73; Szajkowski, *Poverty and Social Welfare among French Jews, 1800–1880* (New York, 1954), 7; Szajkowski, "Riots in Alsace during the Revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848," *Zion* 20 (1955/6), 88–91; Szajkowski, "Jewish Religious Observance during the French Revolution in 1789," in *Jews and the French Revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848* (New York, 1970), 785–808; Jules Bauer, "Les Juifs comtadins pendant la Révolution," *Revue des Études Juives* 54 (1907), 284.

[42] See Michael K. Silber, "The Historical Experience of German Jewry and its Impact on Haskalah and Reform in Hungary," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987), 107–57; and S. Posener, "The Immediate Economic and Social Effects of the Emancipation of the Jews of France," *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (1939), 308–12.

after 1820.[43] For two or three generations, most Jews of the northeast were isolated from the transformative forces at work in urban areas. This was evident in the persistence of traditional economic pursuits, folk customs, the use of Yiddish, fertility patterns, resistance to ritual modifications, and the slow pace of assimilation to bourgeois standards of behavior.[44] Without a cohesive framework for administering regenerative programs, modernization was sluggish and proceeded without direction.

Unprecedented efforts during the Napoleonic regime to transform French Jewry rested on the primacy of the state in promoting social reform. Following the conclusion of the Concordat in 1801, the Emperor introduced parity among the major religions by enacting laws for the public regulation of the Protestant community and by assuming responsibility for clerical salaries. Judaism was subsequently granted the status of an officially recognized religion alongside Catholicism and Protestantism, but a quarter-century would pass before Jewish clergy were likewise salaried by the state under the constitutional monarchy of Louis Philippe in 1831. Only then was the principle of parity fully realized. This achievement, which was viewed by contemporaries as the culminating step in their Emancipation, both deepened the sense of loyalty that leaders of French Jewry felt toward the *patrie* and strengthened their commitment to a wider range of societal and civil responsibilities. In the early nineteenth century, however, when Emancipation was still fragile, the failure to attain full parity alongside Catholics and Protestants went virtually unnoticed. Napoleon's rather hostile opinion of the Jews notwithstanding, important steps were taken to consolidate the changes launched by the Revolution.[45] In a radical departure from the policies of the previous fifteen years, Napoleonic legislation aimed to redefine the relationship of Jews to French society and to the state, and went to great lengths to recast the structure of the Jewish community.

Prompted by a growing disappointment in the socio-economic transformation of Alsatian Jewry, Napoleon's decision to convene the Assembly of Jewish Notables and the Grand Sanhedrin in 1806–7 was part of a larger effort to define the respective spheres of influence of Church and state. Moneylending practices were understood to be emblematic of the questionable suitability of the Jews as citizens. It was necessary, in the view of

[43] See Lee Shai Weissbach, "The Jewish Elite and the Children of the Poor: Jewish Apprenticeship Programs in Nineteenth-Century France," *AJSReview* 12 (1987), 123–42.

[44] See Paula Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1991), 64–85; and Françoise Job, *Les Juifs de Lunéville aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Nancy, 1989), 145–60.

[45] See Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven, 1989), 377: "Napoleon synthesized the egalitarianism of the Revolution with the authority and centralization of the old regime."

Napoleon, to remedy their allegedly deficient "sentiments of civil morality," and he therefore proceeded to convene an assembly empowered with legislative authority to resolve the question of the incompatibility of Judaism and civic duties once and for all. The Sanhedrin endorsed the revolutionary concept of *fraternité* as the exclusive mediating principle between the Jewish religion and French society. Conflicts between the religious obligations of Judaism and the duties demanded of citizens were to be resolved in favor of the latter, since loyalty to the modern state was defined as a supreme religious value. Many French rabbis worked vigorously to invest Emancipation with religious significance; others harbored misgivings about how far the practical halakhic implications of a "republican Judaism" could be taken. A virtual arm of the state, the *consistoire israélite* demanded that rabbis call attention to the lessons of the Sanhedrin in their sermons and required the reproduction of the body's doctrinal decisions in every textbook approved for use in Jewish schools. For subsequent generations, the Sanhedrin provided the authoritative interpretation of Emancipation.[46]

The Paris Sanhedrin was the first Jewish public organization to articulate a positive attitude toward the state and its gentile citizens. It was also the first to delineate a sharp distinction between the civil and religious components of Jewish identity. The civil sphere encompassed the full range of Jewish–gentile relations and duties to the state, whereas the ritual sphere was to remain inviolate. The Sanhedrin valorized social integration and, by affirming the principle of *dina d'malkhuta dina* ("the law of the land is the law"), absolved the Jewish religion of its purported moral failures and incompatibility with civic duties. Notwithstanding the delegates' fulsome declarations of patriotism and brotherhood, they did not cave in to the demands of the government. The writings of R. Aaron Worms, who served as one of the delegates from Metz, confirm that the Assembly's responses adhered to Jewish law, and the *Discours* pronounced by R. David Sintzheim, president of the Sanhedrin, adamantly defended the morality of the Talmud in a nineteenth-century idiom. Having reaffirmed the acceptance of citizenship in new terms, the Sanhedrin fashioned the rudiments of an ideology of emancipation, one that proved vital to the regeneration project for decades to come. Paradoxically, the Sanhedrin represented Judaism as both a depoliticized religion and as the integration of *patrie et religion*. But the absence of any explicit mention of ritual reform confirmed that French citizenship rested on loyalty to the state and on enduring commitment to social integration.[47]

[46] Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews and the Sanhedrin* (London, 1979).

[47] Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 220–4; Jay R. Berkovitz, "The Napoleonic Sanhedrin: Halakhic Foundations and Rabbinic Legacy," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal* 54 (2007), 11–34.

Despite the reassurances provided by lay and rabbinic leaders assembled in Paris, the government's confidence in the ability of the Jews to undergo self-reform faded quickly. In an apparent response to the intense anti-Jewish sentiment among Alsatian peasantry, Napoleon issued an imperial decree just one year later, on March 17, 1808, that nullified all debts owed to Jews by soldiers, minors, and women, and canceled any loan granted at a rate of interest above 10 percent. The "décret infâme," as it later was called, prohibited the movement of Alsatian Jews to other *départements*, prevented Jewish immigrants from settling in Alsace, and barred Jews from supplying replacements for military service, although this was common practice. The provisions of the decree were to remain in force for a period of ten years and could be extended if conditions warranted it. With this decree, Emancipation suffered a major setback. The Jews of France were denied the rights constitutionally guaranteed to French citizens and were once again expected to prove themselves worthy of citizenship. Following the exile of Napoleon, public debate on the compatibility of Judaism with the duties of citizenship resumed; among gentile discussants, the Sanhedrin was admired as an icon of innovation and was criticized as a symbol of unrealized potential. Whatever the motivation behind the imperial decree, the result was the establishment of French Jewry as a separate body, subject directly to the will and authority of the Emperor. Already in 1814, the Conseils généraux of the Haut- and Bas-Rhin demanded that the 1808 regulations remain in force. Efforts to thwart the renewal of the 1808 restrictions beyond the original ten-year term began shortly after Napoleon was deposed. Arguing that the Napoleonic decree was a violation of the status of the Jews as citizens, representatives of the five *départements* in Alsace-Lorraine were able to win support among public officials. A year later, with the founding of the new Paris journal *L'Israélite français*, leaders of the Paris Jewish community succeeded in galvanizing the support needed to defeat the petition that would have extended the Napoleonic restrictions.[48]

Equally repercussive was the provision of the 1808 decree that established the consistory system as the new communal framework for French Jews. Modeled after the Protestant system, the *consistoire israélite* was authorized to administer internal Jewish affairs and to represent Jewish concerns before the government. Napoleonic legislation recast the structure of the Jewish community in the hope of redefining both the relationship of Jews to French society and the relationship of Judaism to the state. Initially, a consistory was established in each department with a Jewish population of 2,000 or more; all

[48] Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews and the Sanhedrin*, 128–60; Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages*, 147–8.

told, seven consistories were formed, and at the administrative helm sat the Central Consistory in Paris. At the outset, they were charged with community administration, which included all aspects of synagogue/religious life; *régénération*, which pertained to the elimination of begging, vocational and agricultural training, and the supervision of schools; and policing tasks, which involved surveillance of the Jewish population. Two areas that were not specifically prescribed in the original legislation – the protection of Jewish rights and religious modernization – eventually came under the purview of consistorial responsibility and became the subject of intense public debate. Regarding the former, the Consistory's record was uneven and was occasionally criticized for being overly conservative and ineffective. The trend toward lay domination, arguably the most salient feature of consistorial Judaism, found expression in efforts to bring rabbinic authority under control in order to facilitate the implementation of synagogue and educational reforms. Although much energy was directed at modernizing rabbinic training and creating a rabbinic hierarchy, it was not until 1829 that a central rabbinical seminary was established, and it was only in 1839 that the Central Consistory endeavored to overhaul its constitution relative to the surveillance, censure, and control of rabbis. The emphasis on centralization echoed comparable governmental strategies aimed at the general populace, while the highly valued theme of unity inspired the goal of fusing the Ashkenazic and Sephardic liturgies into a single rite, along with efforts to institutionalize uniform ritual reforms throughout France. To the extent that unity was successfully realized, the achievement represented a significant departure from the mentality of the *ancien régime* in which local and regional forces were paramount.[49]

Throughout the nineteenth century, the course of Jewish Emancipation remained interwoven with the revolutionary legacy of liberty, fraternity, and equality. The emergence of a modern Jewish ethos was guided by the progressive interpretation of this legacy, but the foundation for a new vision shared by all sectors of French Jewry, irrespective of ethnic heritage, geographical origin, or religious orientation, was already established in the first decades of the nineteenth century. During the Napoleonic regime, the Bourbon Restoration, and the July Monarchy, aggressive efforts to reconstruct Jewish communal institutions proceeded under the watchful eye of governmental authorities. Building on the theme of *régénération*, leaders constructed a new identity that rested on the subordination of religion to the state, the depoliticization of Judaism, and the parity of Judaism with Catholicism and Protestantism. In the century following Emancipation,

[49] Phyllis Cohen Albert, *The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Hanover, MA, 1977); Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-century France* (Detroit, 1989).

these premises would rarely be contested. Debate centered on how much of the legacy of traditional Judaism ought to be preserved in an age in which social and cultural barriers were viewed disdainfully. Were Jews prepared to break with their troubled relationship to the world around them and surrender the symbols of their separate culture? These questions would be left to reformers who, for the most part, remained within the boundaries set by the Paris Sanhedrin.

Concerns about the compatibility of Jewish ritual with the social and political demands of citizenship were aggravated by the awareness that Emancipation had shattered the traditional theological underpinnings of Exile and the ethos of separation from non-Jews. Citizenship was frequently invoked to justify the removal of rituals that embodied the social and political dimensions of traditional Judaism. Other factors, including growing religious indifference and the assimilation of bourgeois values, added even greater urgency to the project of religious modernization. Nevertheless, efforts to enhance the esthetic appeal of the synagogue, the recitation of prayers in the vernacular, the use of the organ, and the insistence on greater decorum did not crystallize until the 1840s. Even then, French Jews rejected the radical reforms that had been introduced in Germany, including the elimination of liturgical references to the Land of Israel and the messiah; the annulment of the dietary laws, traditional Sabbath restrictions, and circumcision; and the ban on intermarriage. In contrast to Germany, where cultural transformation was rapid, modernization in France was, ironically, impeded by the Revolution. With the emigration of rabbis and intellectuals during the latter Napoleonic years, no modernizing elite within the ranks of the Jewish community emerged until the 1820s and early 1830s. Owing to a lag of nearly a half-century between the attainment of civic equality and the concrete effects of cultural modernization, the majority of France's Jews did not encounter the trauma of Emancipation until decades later. By the time reformers were prepared to address the issues of religious modernization, the prospects for ritual reform were already quite limited, and the same was true of education. Modern schools that might have become the training ground for more radical activity were established very late, well after the rabbinate had emerged as a power in community affairs and had assumed a controlling interest in Jewish schooling. Most reformist efforts were devoted to the socio-economic regeneration of the lower classes, particularly through the creation of schools for the urban and rural poor. Finally, the structure of the Franco-Jewish community imposed public discipline and moderation in religious and political affairs.[50]

[50] Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages*, 197–8, 208–10, 227–35.

CONCLUSION

Despite the sweeping changes that accompanied the Revolution of 1789, the nineteenth-century Jewish community evinced remarkable structural continuity with the pre-revolutionary *kehillah*. Dominated by many of the same wealthy families as in the *ancien régime*, the consistorial leadership controlled communal institutions as before and remained resistant to wider participation in the decision-making process. At the same time, out of the struggle for citizenship and in response to Napoleonic reforms, there emerged a national leadership that had not existed prior to the Revolution and this contributed – though slowly – to the formation of a new Franco-Jewish self-image.[51] Culturally, traditional structures of meaning remained plausible long after the end of the *ancien régime*, as evidenced by the continued popularity of folk religion in all communities, though mainly in the northeastern provinces. Indeed, the continued centrality of ritual was a most striking trend in nineteenth-century France, related both to the importance attached to the preservation of a distinct social and cultural identity and also to the role envisioned for Judaism in French public life. Accordingly, French Judaism sharply rejected the separatism favored by one wing of the orthodox community, while remaining resistant to the liberal demand for *la fusion sociale*. Embodying the central doctrines of the Sanhedrin, republican Judaism viewed service to state and society as a religious obligation and rejected any distinction between Jew and non-Jew in the performance of ethical duties; it understood the Jewish messianic idea almost exclusively in terms of its universal-humanistic implications. Precisely how the role of the ritual commandments ought to be defined was a more divisive issue, however. Proponents of *régénération*, as distinct from more conservative champions of Jewish tradition, tended to interpret rituals symbolically, as in the case of Jewish festivals that were viewed as paradigms of the Revolution and of Emancipation. This entailed the creative reinterpretation of existing rituals and the formation of new ones. Paradoxically, the organization of French Jews under the consistorial system was a force of conservatism. As the official representative of all sectors of the Jewish population, the consistorial leadership avoided measures that might threaten the unity, whether imagined or real, of French Jewry. Despite ideological divisions, the structure of the Jewish community imposed the notion of public discipline, and from this emerged a consensus on the necessity of moderation. Minor religious reforms introduced by the consistories effectively undercut

[51] Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. from the Hebrew by Jane Marie Todd (Stanford, 1996), 36–7.

the prospects of radical religious reforms and precluded the emergence of a full-fledged reform movement as in Germany.[52]

Evidence of continuity from the *ancien régime* to the post-revolutionary period is not at all incompatible with the emergence of an autochthonous Franco-Jewish culture within several decades after the Revolution. The progressive break with the long-standing religious and cultural tradition linking the Jews of Alsace-Lorraine with territories to the east began in the last stages of the *ancien régime* and gathered momentum under the impact of the Revolution and the Napoleonic era. Identification with the successes and achievements of France contributed forcefully to the ethos of cultural distinctiveness. This was due, in no small measure, to the powerful role that religion continued to play in modern Jewish culture, even among those who were not traditionally observant. Although the Jews of France underwent a radical transformation that redefined their relationship to the society around them, the terms and concepts of the Jewish religious tradition remained central to the discourse of modernization, no less than in the *ancien régime*. Religion assumed a dramatic role in helping French Jews to interpret the meaning of Emancipation and the ideals of 1789.

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[52] Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages*, 191–212.

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CHAPTER 35

THE JEWS OF GREAT BRITAIN (1650–1815)

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Edward I expelled the Jews of England in 1290 and from then until the middle of the seventeenth century there was no Jewish community in Britain. However, a few unconverted Jews – physicians, merchants, adventurers – visited from time to time for short periods but they did not come intending to settle permanently. The absence of a community for approximately three and a half centuries (Cecil Roth called this "the middle period" in Anglo-Jewish history) was decisive in shaping the re-establishment of Jewish life and the subsequent course of civil and social integration. It removed what was a formidable obstacle to the betterment of Jewish status elsewhere in Europe – the existence of medieval and early modern statutes and charters limiting Jewish mobility, residence, property rights, and economic activity. When Jews resettled in Britain, they and their descendants were spared the struggle to revoke or weaken laws detailing what was forbidden and what permitted. The cultural slate was not blank by any means – anti-Jewish sentiment continued to circulate in religious and cultural life in the centuries when Jews were absent, witness William Shakespeare's Shylock and Christopher Marlowe's Barabas – but the legal slate was clean or, at a minimum, ambiguous, an advantage few other early modern Jewries enjoyed.

RESETTLEMENT

The context for the return of Jews to Britain was the expansion of the New Christian diaspora in the centuries following the Expulsion from Spain in 1492 and the forced conversion in Portugal in 1497. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Joseph Hacker explains in his contribution to this volume, New Christians (Iberian Jews who had been baptized in 1492 and 1497, and their descendants) established trading colonies in port cities throughout the Mediterranean, northern Europe, the Caribbean, and Latin America. They were seeking to escape Inquisitorial prosecution and to gain an economic foothold in commercially more vibrant lands.

Those who left the Peninsula included both persons who cultivated links to their Jewish past, adhering secretly to remnants of Jewish practice and belief, and persons who sincerely professed Christianity and observed its ceremonies. There were also New Christians whose religious identity was uncertain and fluid. Whatever their religious loyalties, all were at risk of being accused of judaizing simply by virtue of their descent. In Europe, major *converso* communities and Jewish communities of *converso* origin developed in these two centuries in Venice, Livorno, Bordeaux, Hamburg, Amsterdam, and London.

Several score New Christian merchants and their families settled in London between the 1520s and the end of the century, living there as Portuguese rather than Jewish merchants. Most were linked by family and commercial ties to the important New Christian trading colony in Antwerp, then under Spanish rule. The community in London was not stable and failed to take root, in part because it was a trading colony, a satellite of the much larger *converso* community in Antwerp, and in part because it was subject to periodic denunciations for judaizing. Testimony given in Inquisitorial proceedings in Milan, Antwerp, and Lisbon in the 1540s and 1550s leaves little doubt that there was some truth to these charges. This settlement came to an end in 1609, when, as a result of an internal quarrel, one party denounced the other as judaizers and all Portuguese merchants living in London were expelled.

In the 1630s, merchants of *converso* background again began settling in London, attracted by its growing importance in international trade and protected by the treaty of 1630 with Spain, exempting Spanish subjects (which included the Portuguese until 1640) from the laws against recusants (Roman Catholics who refused to attend Anglican services). This colony proved to be more durable than its predecessor and from it emerged the Sephardic community of the second half of the century. Some of these merchants came directly from Catholic lands – France, the Canary Islands, Portugal itself – where Judaism was still prohibited and crypto-Judaism actively persecuted. Others came from Protestant territories – Amsterdam and Hamburg, in particular – where Jewish settlement was tolerated and those of New Christian background did not have to live as nominal Christians. The latter's motives for migrating were commercial, not religious, since they were already able to live openly as Jews. But once settled in London, whatever their previous commitment to Judaism, these Iberian merchants were required to act as Roman Catholics and to attend mass occasionally in the chapels of the French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Venetian ambassadors. Whitehall officials, City merchants, and religious authorities knew that some of these merchants were crypto-Jews but they

left them undisturbed, no doubt because they were preoccupied with more pressing matters in the turbulent decades of the 1640s and 1650s.

A nexus of contingent events and deep currents brought about a shift in the status of this nominally Catholic merchant colony in the winter of 1655–6. Anglo-Jewish historians in the Victorian period and in much of the twentieth century tended to mythologize this moment, representing it as a symbol of English liberality and tolerance, in general, and sympathy for Jews, in particular.[1] Viewing it in this light, however, is anachronistic. It reflects the influence of Whig historiography in praise of Oliver Cromwell, and Anglo-Jewry's understanding of its history as a narrative of steady progress. The interplay of short-term events and long-term currents was, in truth, more complex than this celebratory formula suggests.

The cultural background to the return of Jews was the radical Puritan belief that Protestant England was destined to play a decisive role in the coming of the Millennium.[2] A key element in this was the conviction that the conversion of the Jews and, in some accounts, their return to the Land of Israel would be a prelude to or a consequence of the Millennium's coming. In this divine, redemptive scheme, England, having already overthrown the yoke of Roman Catholicism and restored Christianity to uncontaminated purity, was assigned the task of converting the Jews. The godly English were to accomplish this with love and kindness rather than with violence and persecution, as in Catholic lands. For this to occur, they reasoned, they must bring the Jews into sustained, intimate contact with their own cleansed Christianity – that is, they needed to effect their permanent return to English soil. This notion appeared initially in the last decades of Elizabeth's reign and then gained broader support in the first decades of the seventeenth century. In the 1640s, with the coming of the Civil War and the breakdown of censorship, Church courts, and ecclesiastical control of education, brakes on the religious imagination disappeared, and previously unorthodox ideas, including conversionist millenarianism, received a wider hearing than ever before. In the intoxicating atmosphere of the time, supporters of the parliamentary cause expected the conversion of the Jews and the coming of the Millennium in the near future.

Historians often label this kind of sentiment "philosemitic." The term, however, is misleading. It was pro-Jewish only to the extent that it promoted measures that improved the circumstances of Jewish life in the short run. But it was not motivated by any enduring, unambiguous

[1] Eliane Glaser, *Judaism without Jews: Philosemitism and Christian Polemic in Early Modern England* (Houndmills, UK, 2007), 17–23.

[2] David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603–1655* (Oxford, 1982).

sympathy for Judaism or Jews. It marked no fundamental re-evaluation of the worth of Judaism, other than as preparation for Christianity. (This reassessment did not occur in Christian theological circles anywhere until after the Holocaust.) Its true aim was the destruction of Judaism – by the conversion of Jews, using non-violent rather than violent means. Its slogan (had it had one) was that the only good Jews were converted Jews. Its willingness to tolerate Jews, to expose them to the godly conduct of the English, flowed from internal Christian needs. Still, it was this kind of "philosemitism" that introduced the idea of Jewish resettlement to public debate and thus prepared the ground for the events that allowed the re-establishment of Jewish communal life.

Reports about English interest in Jewish resettlement reached Amsterdam's thriving Jewish community. Menasseh ben Israel (1604–57), a Sephardic rabbi of New Christian descent in contact with English religious sectarians in Amsterdam, responded enthusiastically, for temporal and religious reasons, to the news from England. He was concerned about finding new lands of refuge for Jewish settlement, where former New Christians and their descendants could start their lives afresh, and about accelerating the coming of the messianic age by scattering the Jews "from one end of the earth to the other" (Deut. 28:64), a prophecy that remained unfulfilled as long as Jews were absent from Britain. His messianism was stimulated as well by reports that reached Amsterdam about the discovery of a group of Indians in a remote part of present-day Colombia who were descendants of the biblical tribe of Reuben, one of the so-called ten lost tribes. When Protestant millenarians in Holland and England asked Menasseh ben Israel about the reports, he responded by writing *The Hope of Israel* (1650), which discussed various theories about the origins of the American Indians and reaffirmed his faith in God's messianic promises to the Jews. In addition to the original Spanish and Latin editions, he also published an English translation in London that same year, with a dedication to Parliament and the Council of State, attributing messianic significance to their work.[3]

Publication of *The Hope of Israel* marked the start of a campaign by Menasseh ben Israel to obtain the English government's approval for Jewish resettlement. He contacted English diplomats in the Netherlands and petitioned the Council of State but was unable to travel to London for several years due to the outbreak of the first Dutch War (1652–4). In fall 1654, his son traveled to London and approached Oliver Cromwell, who shared the millenarian beliefs of his contemporaries and was favorably

[3] Menasseh ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*, ed. Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon (Oxford, 1987).

inclined toward the New Christian merchants in London, who were supplying him with political intelligence from abroad. Menasseh sailed for London in September 1655, having beforehand written a pamphlet in English, known by its short title *The Humble Addresses*, in which he set forth the case for readmission. In the body of the pamphlet, he emphasized the commercial utility of the Jews and their political trustworthiness and refuted a number of common slanders, while limiting the messianic argument for resettlement to the introduction. Cromwell and a majority on the Council favored readmission, but, aware that the issue was contentious, convened a gathering of lawyers, merchants, and divines, to solicit their advice and to build support for the measure.

Throughout the effort, first in Amsterdam and then later in London, Menasseh acted on his own, not as a representative of either the Amsterdam community or the New Christians in London, although he seems to have enjoyed the unofficial blessing of major figures in Amsterdam. We do not know whether they shared his messianic hopes, but they were concerned, like him, with finding new territories for Jewish settlement, a problem made more acute by the ferocious operations of the Spanish Inquisition after 1645 and the collapse of Dutch rule in Brazil between 1645 and 1654. They also had a strong commercial interest in gaining a foothold in England. The Navigation Act of 1651 promoted English overseas trade at the expense of the Dutch and threatened to disrupt trading links between Amsterdam and Barbados, the center of Caribbean sugar production. The establishment of outposts in London would allow Sephardic merchants in Amsterdam to circumvent the act.

The Whitehall Conference, as the assembly that Cromwell convened has come to be known, met for five sessions from December 4 to 18, 1655, but the debate was more divisive than he probably anticipated and failed to give him the support he was seeking. The merchants were fearful that the Jews would monopolize trade, while the non-millenarian clergy were terrified that they would publicly blaspheme against Christianity, seduce Christians from their faith, and murder Christian children for their blood. Following Cromwell's dissolution of the conference, events took an unexpected turn. In October 1655, England had gone to war with Spain. In March 1656, the New Christian merchants in London, hitherto inactive in Menasseh's campaign, declared themselves Jewish refugees from Spain to prevent the seizure of their property as Spanish subjects. The Council of State responded favorably to the petition of one of them to be recognized as a "Portuguese of the Hebrew nation" but failed to act on Menasseh's petition to Cromwell asking permission to gather privately for prayer and to acquire a burial ground. Although Cromwell and the Council of State failed to respond to his request (at least publicly), the *conversos* in

London went ahead, nevertheless, in creating communal institutions. They brought a Torah scroll from Amsterdam and a religious functionary from Hamburg, rented a house for use as a synagogue (December 1656), and acquired a plot of land for use as a cemetery (January 1657).

Most historians assume that Cromwell assured the leaders of the group in some way that they would not be disturbed in their observance of Judaism. (If he had not done so, it is difficult to explain why the New Christians then in London publicly declared themselves to be Jews at that moment.) No formal act of readmission was ever issued nor was any charter specifying the parameters of Jewish residence or their civil status. In retrospect, this was a blessing in disguise. The documentless character of readmission left Jewish status undefined, which, in practice, meant that Jews were free to do what they were not explicitly prohibited from doing. As we will see, such prohibitions were neither numerous nor relevant to the lives of most Jews.

After the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, merchants in the City of London, fearful of Jewish competition, sought on several occasions to restrict Jewish activity, but with little success.[4] Charles II and James II were willing to protect the fledgling community, the former because he had negotiated with the leaders of the Amsterdam community for assistance while still in exile and believed in the utility of the Jews to the state, and the latter because it was in his interest, as defender of the Catholic cause, to defend any group that was outside the Church of England. The accession to the throne in 1688 of William of Orange, who had long-standing links to Jewish entrepreneurs in the Netherlands, marked no change in the position of London's Jews.

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE JEWS IN LONDON

In the half-century after the readmission, a steady trickle of Sephardim made their way to London – professing Jews from the Netherlands and Dutch and English colonies in the Caribbean, and New Christians from the Canary Islands, the Iberian Peninsula, and France. At the outset of Menasseh ben Israel's mission to Cromwell, there were about twenty households of New Christian origin in London; at the end of the decade, about thirty-five. In 1684, the community numbered 414 persons; in 1695, 499.[5] (By the end of

[4] David S. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England, 1485–1850* (Oxford, 1994), 140–56.

[5] On the estimates for the 1660s, see Edgar R. Samuel, "The First Fifty Years," in V. D. Lipman, ed., *Three Centuries of Anglo-Jewish History* (London, 1961), 41 n. 6; for the 1684 figure, see Lionel D. Barnett, ed., *Bevis Marks Records,* vol. I*: The Early History of the Congregation from the Beginning until 1800* (Oxford, 1940), 16–20; for the 1695 figure, see Robert Cohen, "'La-vo 'im Mishpeḥotehem . . . u-Lehityashev Kan': Yahadut London ha-Sefardit be Maḥatsit ha-Sheniyah shel ha-Meah ha-Sheva-'Esreh" ["To Come with their

the century, there was also a small but unknown number of Ashkenazim in London as well.) The hope that Britain, like the Netherlands, would become a major refuge for persecuted *conversos* was not realized, however. At the end of the century, the Sephardim in Amsterdam, Venice, Livorno, and Hamburg each outnumbered those in London, despite four and a half decades of unrestricted settlement. The new arrivals included overseas merchants, commodity brokers, dealers in precious stones and jewelry, commercial clerks, and a few physicians, as well as petty traders, servants, vagabonds, and the like. The merchants, brokers, and traders were linked by commerce and kinship to Sephardic and New Christian merchants in ports elsewhere in Europe, North Africa, and the New World. As a group, they constituted a single transatlantic mercantile fraternity, whose members circulated freely within its parameters, doing business and contracting marriage alliances among themselves. They more closely resembled each other than the inhabitants of the port cities in which they lived, but this changed in the next century with their gradual acculturation.

The earliest members of the community attempted to replicate the religious customs, congregational structure, and communal practices of the Amsterdam community, of which it was an offshoot and, to some extent, a dependency. Its first by-laws (1664) were based on those of Amsterdam, which, in turn, were based on those of Venice. Implicit in the by-laws was the assumption that the London community enjoyed the same degree of legal autonomy and coercive authority as the Venetian community, which was a self-governing corporate entity with regulatory and police powers. The London by-laws, for example, vested in the *mahamad* ("governing council") near absolute power over members of the congregation. However, in contrast to most other early modern Jewish communities, membership in the community was voluntary. It was not a traditional *kehillah* but a modern congregation, like those the Ashkenazim established in the following century, even if its earliest leaders thought otherwise. London's Jews, from the very start, were free to choose whether or not they would affiliate with and support the community and accept the authority of its lay and religious leaders.

Due to their New Christian background, with its potential to destabilize religious certainties,[6] many in the resettlement community and among those

Families ... and Dwell Here": London Sephardic Jewry in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century], in Yosef Kaplan and David S. Katz, eds., *Geirush ve-Shivah: Yahadut Angliyah be-Hilufe ha-Zemanim* [Banishment and Return] (Jerusalem, 1993), 147–57.

[6] Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, 1997); David Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580–1700* (Philadelphia, 2004); Todd M. Endelman, "The Impact of the *Converso* Experience on English Sephardim," in *Broadening Jewish History: Towards a Social History of Ordinary Jews* (Oxford, 2011).

who arrived subsequently either remained formally outside the community, adhering to neither Judaism nor Christianity, or, while affiliating, refused to accept the yoke of the law in its totality. Making the transition from nominal Catholic to observant Jew was not easy, especially in London, where the number of Jews was small, learning and piety in short supply, and religious authority weak.[7] North African-born Jacob Sasportas (1610–98), who served briefly as *haḥam* ("rabbi") before fleeing from the Great Plague in 1665, clashed repeatedly with the lay leaders of the community over the question of religious discipline, provoking them with attacks on wealthy members who committed religious transgressions, such as refusing to have their sons circumcised or to be circumcised themselves.[8] Among the very earliest arrivals, the majority did not affiliate with the congregation. Only one-third of those living in London before 1659 were buried in the Sephardic cemetery in Mile End.[9] Those buried there also included New Christians who had never openly declared themselves Jews and who were uncircumcised. This suggests that what bound the community together in the first half-century or so of its existence was less an allegiance to Jewish practice and belief than kinship, a shared past, and a common language and culture.

Their experience living as New Christians before their arrival in England also underwrote their acculturation to English habits of thought and behavior. Among the Sephardim, no far-reaching reassessment of the relationship between secular and Jewish culture occurred because they had not lived previously, even before 1492, in cultural segregation from their Christian neighbors. As New Christians, as a matter of course, they "had their most extensive and direct personal experiences completely outside the organic Jewish community and the spiritual universe of normative Jewish tradition."[10] In Britain, they moved from speaking Spanish and Portuguese to speaking English, adopted current fashions in dress and personal adornment, acquired a taste for English recreations and entertainments, and sought entry to non-Jewish social and cultural groups. Those who grew rich in overseas trade and government contracting purchased

[7] Todd M. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656–1945* (Bloomington, 1990), ch. 1.

[8] Isaiah Tishby, "Yediot Ḥadashot 'al Kehilat ha-'Anusim be-London 'al pi Igerot Sasportas be-Shenat 5425 (1664–5)" [New Information on the *Conversos* in London According to Letters of Sasportas from 1664 to 1665], in Aharon Mirsky, Avraham Grossman, and Yosef Kaplan, eds., *Galut aḥar Golah: Mehkarim be-Toldot 'am Israel Mugashim le-Professor Haim Beinart limlot lo Shivim Shanah* [Essays in Jewish History Presented to Professor Haim Beinart on his Seventieth Birthday] (Jerusalem, 1988).

[9] Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission*, 3.

[10] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto – Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York, 1971), 44.

homes in the countryside around London and took up country pursuits, as was the custom among merchants and financiers who became rich in the City. Prior exposure to scientific learning eased their way into learned societies and educated circles. Five Sephardim (as well as two Ashkenazim) were elected Fellows of the Royal Society in the eighteenth century, while one of them, the conchologist Emanuel Mendes da Costa (1717–91), held the paid post of Clerk of the Royal Society (1764–7) until his dismissal for embezzlement.[11] While those Christians who welcomed the company of learned or wealthy Sephardim never forgot that they were Jews and often commented on their alleged Jewish traits and looks, they rarely allowed their feelings that Jews were aliens and outsiders to prevent their integration. In time, this led to more intensive social relations between well-bred Britons and wealthy Sephardim and eventually to the forging of marriage ties. (Some latitudinarian Anglican clergymen were willing to marry a Jew and a Christian without the prior conversion of the Jewish partner.) Indeed, defection from the Sephardic community was sufficiently common for it to grow only slightly between 1750 and 1830, despite the arrival of new immigrants.[12]

ASHKENAZIM IN LONDON

Ashkenazim from the Netherlands, the German states, and, to a lesser extent, Poland began to migrate to London soon after the resettlement, and by 1690 they were numerous enough to establish their own synagogue.[13] By 1720, at the latest, they outnumbered the Sephardim, whose population was then about 1,050. In the eighteenth century, the trickle became a wave, and by 1815 the Jewish population (in London and the provinces) numbered between 12,000 and 15,000, of whom a little more than 2,000 were Sephardim. A handful of the central European immigrants, like Benjamin Levy (d. 1704) from Hamburg, Aron Goldsmit (*c.* 1715–82) from Amsterdam, and Nathan Rothschild (1777–1836) from Frankfurt, were well-established merchants (or their sons), seeking access to what had become the most dynamic economy in Europe. They, like the prosperous Sephardim who preceded them, sank roots in English urban and country life and achieved a degree of social integration that was not paralleled

[11] On the engagement of Jews and science in England, see Geoffrey Cantor, *Quakers, Jews, and Science: Religious Responses to Modernity and the Sciences in Britain, 1650–1900* (Oxford, 2005).

[12] Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, ch. 1; Endelman, *Broadening Jewish History*, ch. 11.

[13] This section draws on Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society*, Ann Arbor Paperbacks edn. (Ann Arbor, 1999).

elsewhere in Europe at such an early date. However, they were atypical. The overwhelming majority of Ashkenazic immigrants were impoverished petty traders, driven to seek a living in Britain by the absence of opportunities for Jews in the German states, which before Emancipation restricted where they might settle, how they might earn their living, even whether they might marry, and embittered their lives with tolls and taxes. The English state, in contrast, imposed no restrictions on Jewish immigration or residence.

Most Ashkenazim brought with them little capital and few artisanal skills and most earned their living, once settled in England, in low-status trades they were able to enter with ease: hawking goods in the streets of London, buying and selling old clothes and other second-hand goods, and peddling notions, gimcracks, and inexpensive jewelry in the provinces. These trades were not only low status but also associated with disreputable and even criminal behavior. Jewish peddlers, hawkers, and stall keepers volubly touted the virtues of their often shoddy goods and aggressively pursued potential customers in streets, markets, and other public places. In addition, dealers in second-hand merchandise, whether Jewish or Christian, were notorious for purchasing stolen goods. Some Jewish dealers were full-time fences with close ties to criminal gangs and regular outlets for disposing of the goods they bought. Street traders were well known for unscrupulous selling practices, such as misrepresenting their goods, and for passing counterfeit coins while making change. Because much of the Jewish lower class was sunk in poverty, it also included persons who regularly or intermittently engaged in criminal activity that was characteristic of the urban poor more generally: shoplifting, burglary, stealing from carts and warehouses, picking pockets, assault, and robbery. Some were members of organized gangs; many more turned to crime only on occasion, usually when in dire straits. While it is impossible to determine the extent to which Jews were disproportionately represented in the ranks of urban criminals, public officials and social reformers, from the 1770s on, commented frequently on the association between Jews and crime, an association that hoary myths about Jewish malevolence reinforced.

The disreputability of Jewish street traders and criminals and the tendency of Christians to think of all Jews, rich and poor alike, in an undifferentiated way threatened the efforts of the expanding Ashkenazic mercantile and financial elite to improve their social status. In the last third of the century, in response to growing public criticism of Jewish criminality and violence, communal leaders took steps to control and reform the poor. In 1766, following the first great surge in Jewish criminal activity, the *parnasim* of the Great Synagogue in Duke's Place began cooperating with local authorities to check Jewish crime. They supplied the Bow Street

magistrate Sir John Fielding with information about Jewish fences and excommunicated several of them in order to disassociate the community from their activity. In 1770, when Fielding testified before a House of Commons committee about housebreakers taking their loot to Jewish receivers, the Great Synagogue advertised in the newspapers that it was offering a reward for the detection of persons buying stolen goods. The following year, Ashkenazic leaders aided the government in apprehending a notorious gang of Jewish murderers and burglars (the Chelsea gang) and then afterwards publicly distanced themselves from the criminals in a newspaper notice branding them "foreign miscreants who stain our religion by calling themselves Jews." They excommunicated the members of the gang and urged the government to restrict the flow of impoverished Jews from northern Europe, which it unsuccessfully tried to do.

The persistence of Jewish crime led the Ashkenazic elite, beginning in the late 1780s, to craft responses that addressed the roots of Jewish misbehavior. In 1788, it initiated the first of many schemes to reform the manners and morals of the children of the poor and teach them useful skills. In that year, the Ashkenazic Talmud Torah (a traditional charity school for Hebrew studies) was reorganized in a revolutionary fashion. Hebrew instruction was de-emphasized; the Talmud was made an elective subject; and secular subjects were added to the curriculum. When boys left the school at age 13, they were apprenticed to respectable Jewish artisans, mainly tailors, glass cutters, watch finishers, and pencil makers. While the school resembled those that the *maskilim* were beginning to create in Germany at the time, its establishment was not inspired by them. It was a response, rather, to a set of circumstances that were not present elsewhere in Europe (with the possible exception of Amsterdam): the absence of government restrictions on Jewish settlement, the voluntary character of the Jewish community, the consequent inability of the elite to police the poor, and, more generally, the boisterous, throbbing unruliness of everyday social life in London, the largest city in Europe at the time.

The reformed Talmud Torah enrolled few students – eighteen boys in 1793 and twenty-one in 1803 – and did little to improve the economic status of the community as a whole. As Jewish poverty and crime increased in the first decades of the new century, communal leaders proposed further schemes to reform the Jewish poor. The most ambitious was that of the surgeon Joshua Van Oven (1766–1838) in 1802. With the backing of Abraham Goldsmid (1756–1810) and other communal magnates, Van Oven sent a proposal to Parliament to establish a communal poor relief board, to be financed by one-half the parish poor rates that Jews paid and given quasi-governmental powers, including the power to expel troublesome foreign-born Jews. The Sephardim opposed the proposal because

they did not want to be associated with the Ashkenazim, for status reasons, and because they believed they would pay a disproportionate share of the cost. Jews outside Goldsmid's circle also opposed it because it gave the rich enormous power over the poor. They recognized that the elite was seeking to reclaim the police powers of the quasi-autonomous, pre-modern *kehillah* ("corporative community"). In the end, the scheme's backers abandoned it. Five years later, in 1807, a group of Ashkenazic magnates established the more modest Jews' Hospital in Mile End Road. It consisted of two departments: an old-age home, whose purpose was exclusively charitable, and a trade school, whose goal was to keep the children of the poor from the temptations of the street and teach them productive skills. The most ambitious effort to address the education of the poor was the establishment of the Jews' Free School in 1817. While the history of the school belongs to a later period, it warrants mentioning that those who supported its creation were also motivated by the incursions that Christian missionaries were making among the poor by offering free schooling to their children.

THE PROVINCES

London remained the demographic center of British Jewry throughout the Georgian period and beyond. At any time, about two-thirds of the Jews in Britain lived in the metropolis. Jewish communities (defined by the acquisition of a cemetery, the commencement of public worship, or the establishment of a congregation) began to emerge in provincial market towns, resorts, and naval ports after 1740, although the settlement of individuals and families predated this. Some communities owed their origins to successful itinerant peddlers who settled down and opened shops. In other instances, London traders and craftsmen were attracted by the growing demand for consumer goods and services and the decay of local regulatory controls on commerce. At the end of the century, there were about twenty towns outside London with clusters of Jewish residents, although not all could be described as organized communities.[14] Some were old market towns (Canterbury, Exeter, Gloucester, Norwich, Oxford); others were resorts and spas (Bath, Brighton, Cheltenham); those with the largest communities were naval ports (Chatham,

[14] Cecil Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry: The Early History of the Jewish Communities in the English Countryside, 1740–1840* (London, 1950), 24. Roth's account is dated and should be supplemented by V. D. Lipman, "The Origins of Provincial Jewry," in Aubrey Newman, ed., *Provincial Jewry in Victorian Britain* (London, 1975); and Harold Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England* (Rutherford, NJ, 1982), ch. 4.

Portsmouth, Plymouth, Sheerness). The growth of Jewish communities in these coastal towns was a consequence of the expansion of the royal navy in the eighteenth century and the government's concomitant investment in dry docks, stores, roperies, and building yards. Commercial opportunities drew Jewish watchmakers, jewelers, silversmiths, engravers, pawnbrokers, and purveyors of optical goods to these bustling port towns. Jewish shopkeepers were also prominent as slopsellers, outfitting sailors with clothes and sailing gear, and as naval agents, providing sailors with goods on credit or loans against receipt of wages or prize money.[15] In general, the Midlands and the North, which became home to the largest provincial communities in the industrial age, attracted few Jews in the eighteenth century. There was no permanent settlement in Manchester, for example, until the late 1780s and early 1790s.[16]

LEGAL DISABILITIES

The legal status of Jews in eighteenth-century Britain was both more secure and less well defined than that of Jews living elsewhere in Europe at the time.[17] In the absence of restrictive charters and a formal readmission edict, Jews found themselves in the enviable position of living in a state that took little legislative or administrative notice of them *most of the time*. Jews who were born in Britain were considered citizens, while those who were born abroad were treated by the law like other resident aliens. When Jews encountered legal obstacles to their participation in economic and civil life, in general they did so not as Jews but as persons who were not members of the Church of England and thus unable to take the Christian oaths that those wishing to hold civil office and gain entry to elite institutions were required to swear. In this sense, their legal status was similar to that of Christians who were not members of the established Church. In any case, most Jews in eighteenth-century Britain were too poor and ill educated ever to find themselves in circumstances in which they would have had to take such an oath. Before the 1820s, moreover, even wealthy Jews showed no interest in entering government service, the ancient universities, or the Inns of Court to study for the bar. They were content to aspire to success in finance and overseas trade, where they were at little disadvantage, while those among them who set their sights on making their mark in non-Jewish

[15] Geoffrey L. Green, *The Royal Navy and Anglo-Jewry, 1740–1820: Traders and Those Who Served* (London, 1989).

[16] Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740–1875* (Manchester, 1976), 10–12.

[17] The most complete account of Jewish legal status is still H. S. Q. Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law* (London, 1908).

society did so by what was a time-honored path in English history: they amassed a fortune in finance or trade, purchased country estates, and adopted the habits, tastes, manners, and morals of the hegemonic landowning elite. The few barriers that Jews encountered in economic life were either not crushing or easily sidestepped. For example, the requirement that tradesmen who wished to operate retail businesses within the City of London become freemen of the City barred Jews from selling retail there since the process included the swearing of a Christian oath. However, there was no similar requirement in the districts immediately to the east of the City's eastern border, where many Jews resided and traded even at this time. Others evaded the requirement by selling to retail customers from premises in the City that were ostensibly wholesale warehouses.

On one occasion alone the question of Jewish status sparked widespread public agitation and debate. The episode – the tumult in 1753 surrounding the repeal of the Jew Bill (as it was popularly known) – is frequently misunderstood and its significance and long-term impact fiercely debated.[18] It began quietly enough. Jewish overseas merchants who were not British-born were at a commercial disadvantage by virtue of their foreign birth: as aliens (not as Jews), they could not own, or share in the ownership of, a British vessel; they were barred from the colonial trade; and they were subject to various alien duties, some twice as high as those native-born merchants paid. Foreign-born merchants resident in Britain were able to obtain relief by becoming naturalized citizens, an expensive procedure, available thus only to the wealthy, requiring application to Parliament for a private naturalization Act. Professing Jews, however, were unable to become naturalized citizens in this way because the naturalization statute of 1609 required applicants to receive the sacrament before the introduction of their bill. A kind of second-class naturalization – known as endenization – was available to Jews through the purchase of royal letters-patent, but while it permitted them to engage in the colonial trade, it did not exempt them from paying alien duties. In January 1753, Joseph Salvador (1716–86), a diamond and coral merchant and frequent advisor to the government on financial matters, approached the Duke of

[18] The key accounts and interpretations are Thomas W. Perry, *Public Opinion, Propaganda, and Politics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study of the Jew Bill of 1753* (Cambridge, MA, 1962); Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, 24–6, 32–3, 36–9, 59–64, 89–91; Robert Liberles, "The Jews and Their Bill: Jewish Motivations in the Controversy of 1753," *Jewish History* 2, 2 (1987), 29–36; Frank Felsenstein, *Antisemitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660–1830* (Baltimore, 1995), ch. 8; James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York, 1996), ch. 7; Dana Rabin, "The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, 2 (2006), 157–71; Michael Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain* (Philadelphia, 2010), 6–7, 16–17, 90–2.

Newcastle, who, with his brother Henry Pelham, dominated British politics at mid-century, requesting legislative relief from the sacramental test. Salvador himself was native-born but was probably acting on behalf of prosperous Sephardim who were foreign-born. He may also have hoped that the change in the naturalization process would strengthen, by extension, the position of Jews in regard to the ownership of freehold property, which was legally ambiguous. The government obliged Salvador and his friends and introduced legislation (the Jewish Naturalization Bill was its proper name) permitting naturalization by private parliamentary Act without taking the sacrament. It encountered some opposition but became law in May 1753.

The scope of the law was modest: it relieved only Jews who were foreign-born and wealthy. Native-born Jews did not require naturalization, for they were already citizens, while alien Jews of modest or no means were unable to bear the cost of a private Act and would not, in any case, have benefited from naturalization. The modesty of the legislation, however, was soon forgotten in a raucous campaign to repeal it, initially fomented by monopolistic merchants who opposed a more open economy and critics of the Pelham ministry (country squires and High Churchmen, largely) who disliked its religious latitudinarianism and political corruption. Their motive was undoubtedly to promote their own factional and economic aims by exploiting popular sympathies – by activating antipathies that were not far beneath the surface but which hitherto were not central to national political life. In doing so, they turned a controversy about legislation of limited scope into a full-scale debate about the place of Jews in English society, the first time that this had happened since the readmission debate under Cromwell. (In 1740, Parliament had passed the Plantation Act, which included a provision easing the naturalization of foreign-born Jews who had been resident in the American colonies for seven years, with *no* outcry at all.)

Petitions were gathered, pamphlets written, meetings convened, and sermons delivered about the Jews, their collective virtues and vices, and the blessing or curse that their incorporation into the English nation would turn out to be. Opponents of the Jew Bill resurrected crude medieval fantasies, including the blood libel and the *foetor judaïcus*; repeated hoary theological taunts, denouncing Jews as blasphemers, deicides, and infidels; and represented them as the embodiment of unrestrained, morally unfettered, economic individualism, consumed by an inhuman thirst for wealth that crowded out other human emotions. They projected hysterical fantasies about the Jewish conquest of England that would surely result if the Jew Bill were not repealed. The country would be swamped with unscrupulous brokers, jobbers, and moneylenders, who, with their ill-gotten gains, would acquire the estates of ruined landowners. And, because dominion followed

property, Jews would control Parliament and rename it the Sanhedrin, convert St. Paul's Cathedral in London to a synagogue, circumcise their tenants, and perpetrate all manner of anti-Christian crimes. At times, hostility overflowed the bounds of rhetorical excess and Jewish peddlers were insulted, harassed, and even attacked. Although those who supported the Jew Bill – an odd mix of liberals, Christian millenarians, and hacks in the employ of the Pelhams – were not silent, the outcry alarmed the ministry. Worried about its potential impact on the coming general election (1754), they withdrew their support and Parliament repealed the Act in November. Political outrage about Jewish naturalization and integration died down. Opponents of the Pelham administration were not interested in translating the anti-Jewish sentiment they had exploited in the recent controversy into legislative curbs on Jewish economic activity, land purchases, or social integration. Because of this and because of the narrow scope of the law, its repeal did not represent a significant legal setback for Anglo-Jewry.

Nonetheless, the anti-Jewish sentiments and themes that came to the fore in 1753 should not be dismissed out of hand as trivial. However much anti-ministerial politicians cultivated anti-Jewish hostility for short-term factional ends, they would not have succeeded in their task if this hostility were not already present and easily tapped and manipulated. As Jacob Katz recognized a half-century ago, "the easy success of the propaganda and the nature of the arguments used during the campaign are telling testimonies to the image of the Jew prevailing in the public mind."[19] Old resentments and fears were mobilized for contemporary cultural and political needs, especially the need to define what was British or English and to condemn, by way of projection onto Jews, the material rapacity that was flourishing in the genteel bosom of the English ruling class itself. The ubiquity of unflattering representations of Jews in English culture throughout the eighteenth century testifies to their availability and usefulness in working through questions of Englishness in public discourse. The clamor in 1753 did not introduce new anti-Jewish themes. Rather, it exploited pre-existing ones, endowing them with new energy and furthering their dissemination. Their injection into political life did not outlive the agitation, but they remained alive in graphic and literary representations of Jews until the end of the Georgian period and long after.[20]

The claim that anti-Jewish sentiments were ubiquitous in Georgian culture does not sit well with the claim that the legal status of British

[19] Jacob Katz, "The Term 'Jewish Emancipation': Its Origin and Historical Impact," in Alexander Altmann, ed., *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA, 1964), 9–10.

[20] See, for example, Felsenstein, *Antisemitic Stereotypes*, and Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation*.

Jews was better than elsewhere and that their day-to-day relations with Christians were similarly less freighted with conflict than elsewhere. At a minimum, the coexistence of negative representations in cultural spheres and benign conditions in social relations suggests that literary representations of Jews must be used with caution, if at all, in drawing inferences about Jewish status. If one were to consult only representations of Jews, then one might conclude, incorrectly, that Jews in Britain were as hard pressed and marginalized as Jews in the German states – which was certainly not the case. The representation of Jews in English culture was, in part, an inheritance of hoary sentiments and ideas, rooted ultimately in the theological demonization of Jews, which were alive and well everywhere in the Christian world. And it was a reflection of the visibility of contemporary Jews in anxiety-provoking socio-economic roles – as *parvenus* and nabobs, street traders, receivers of stolen goods, pickpockets, prizefighters, and toughs.

What was distinctive in Georgian Britain was the disconnection between the extravagant hostility that Britons expressed in the cultural sphere and the modest hostility that flesh-and-blood Jews experienced in daily encounters with them and the state. This disjunction was due to strong countervailing forces and circumstances that favored Jewish settlement, security, and social acceptance. These included the already mentioned absence of restrictive charters from earlier periods and the ambiguity of the readmission process. Also central were the weakening of corporate privileges, the increasing commercialization of social relations and needs, and the birth of liberal individualism and its economic twin, free-market capitalism. Britain was home to the most dynamic, unfettered economy in the world. It offered greater scope for social-climbing, economic mobility, and mischief-making than other European states. While breeding and birth still weighed heavily in determining success or failure, acceptance or rejection, money also counted, often blunting (but not banishing) inherited reservations about Jews and other outsiders. Well-born Britons, however grudgingly, were far more willing to make room for newcomers and outlandish "others" than their counterparts on the Continent. At the same time, the British state was not a highly centralized tutelary state as were the Habsburg Empire under Joseph II and the Prussian kingdom under Frederick the Great. No British monarch or minister ever took an interest in the civil improvement, productivization, or regeneration of Britain's Jews. London, in particular, was a wide open, poorly policed, and lightly governed metropolitan sprawl, where Jews lived choc-a-bloc with Christians of the same rank and station, often mixing indiscriminately in taverns, coffee houses, theatres, and other places of public amusement.

COMMUNAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

One consequence of the state's disinterest in regulating Jewish life was the absence of a state-recognized *kehillah* with the power to discipline Jewish residents. From the mid seventeenth century, the Anglo-Jewish community was a voluntary community – a loose network of synagogues, schools, confraternities, study circles, and charities whose existence and health depended on the willingness of Jews to support them financially and to acknowledge their leaders' authority. Some historians assert that community-wide institutions that were central to Anglo-Jewry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – especially the Board of Deputies and the office of the chief rabbi – began life in the eighteenth century. However, these claims seriously misrepresent the nature of communal life before the Victorian period. The Board of Deputies, for example, officially traces its origins to a committee of wealthy Sephardim that formed in 1760 to congratulate George III on his accession to the throne. However, this claim is tenable only in a formal sense. When Ashkenazic leaders objected to being unrepresented in the delegation, it was agreed that representatives, or deputies, from all the large London synagogues would meet in the future whenever it became necessary to represent Jewish interests to the government. In practice, the group met infrequently until the late 1820s (the start of the so-called emancipation campaign), with five or six years often lapsing between meetings. It was a somnolent group whose impact on Jewish life in Britain at this time was negligible.[21] Indeed, its very somnolence testifies to the absence of matters that required seeking the intervention of the state. Similarly, the founding of the chief rabbinate is often traced to the eighteenth century, to the installation of Aaron Hart (1670–1756) – by his brother Moses Hart (1675–1756), one of the twelve authorized "Jew Brokers" on the London Exchange – as rabbi of the Ashkenazic synagogue in London later known as the Great Synagogue. Hart's writ, however, did not extend formally to other London congregations or to the provinces. On occasion, congregations voluntarily accepted his oversight, such as his licensing of slaughterers, but this was because he was the most prominent representative in England of traditional rabbinic authority, not because he occupied a formal chief rabbinical post.[22]

The voluntary character of communal institutions and the consequent weakness of religious discipline contributed to laxity in domestic and personal observance and indifference to traditional learning. English

[21] Raphael Langham, *250 Years of Convention and Contention: A History of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1760–2010* (London, 2010).

[22] The best account of Ashkenazic rabbis in Georgian London is still Cecil Roth, *The Great Synagogue, London, 1690–1940* (London, 1950).

Jewry in the eighteenth century was not known for either its piety or its learning. While it is now clear that secularization was making deeper inroads in urban Jewish centers in central and western Europe than once believed, its advance in London and the provinces was greater than perhaps anywhere else in Europe.[23] There were other reasons as well for the spread of secularization and acculturation: the crowded intimacy of urban conditions; the multiplication of public entertainments and outlets for sensual pleasure; the unprecedented worship of fashion and luxurious display (no longer a monopoly of the aristocracy and gentry); and the dynamic pace of commerce and finance. It also should be remembered that London and the provincial communities were "pioneer" communities, without long-standing Jewish institutions and traditions. Those who settled there came first and foremost for material reasons. The pious and the learned were not well represented among them relative to their representation in communities like Frankfurt, Prague, Hamburg, and Berlin. More generally, Anglo-Jewish intellectual life lacked intensity and public visibility. Here too the relative benignity of local circumstances was critical (if not decisive). Because British Jews were not engaged in an ongoing struggle to improve their social and legal status in this period, they did not produce the same flood of essays and tracts that German Jews did, touting their humanity and transformative potential and proposing new understandings of Judaism. Even during the Jew Bill controversy, Jewish voices were exceptionally quiet. The pamphlet literature in favor of the legislation was the work of non-Jews who wished to defend religious toleration, curb economic monopolies, and counter the attacks of political opponents.

While the legal status of Anglo-Jewry was not conducive to stimulating the development of a Haskalah movement, as in central Europe, there were Jews in London (even if few in number) who were familiar with both traditional and modern learning and who took part in public debates on religion and politics.[24] They wrote in Hebrew, if they were writing largely for Jews and wanted to reach those who lived elsewhere in Europe (or in Spanish, in the case of the Western Sephardic Diaspora), and in English, if they saw their activity as a contribution to debates that cut across or transcended the religious divide between Judaism and Christianity. Their stance toward traditional Judaism ranged from sympathetic to hostile. In

[23] Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia, 2010). On evidence regarding religious laxity and indifference in England, see Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*.

[24] David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven, CT, 1995), chs. 11 and 12; Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton, 2000).

his *Mateh Dan* (1714), David Nieto (1654–1728), rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation at the start of the eighteenth century, confronted the challenges of the new mechanical thinking of the day, expressing his openness to science (as well as his sensitivity to its limitations) and articulating a theology that was in harmony with rationality but still loyal to revelation. In 1775, in *Critica Sacra Examined*, the otherwise obscure Raphael Baruh intervened in the debate over the alleged textual corruption of the Hebrew Bible and Benjamin Kennicott's project to "restore" it to its pristine state. At the other extreme, Abraham ben Naphtali Tang (d. 1792), whose Hebrew-language work was never published, was a deist who cited Voltaire, denied revelation, and criticized the rabbis of his day for their ignorance of contemporary affairs and ancient history and culture, and for their insensitive and superficial readings of Jewish texts.

While modest in scope, Anglo-Jewish intellectual life was distinctive in tone and focus rather than imitative of developments elsewhere. First, Jewish thinkers in England were more outspoken, even brazen, in defending Judaism and criticizing Christianity than their counterparts in central Europe. In his *Lingua sacra* (1785–7), a Hebrew grammar and dictionary, David Levi (1742–1801), a learned artisan whom David Ruderman calls "a one-man Jewish antidefamation league,"[25] responded to Christian denigration of the accuracy of the Masoretic textual tradition, while in a heated exchange with the scientist and Presbyterian minister Joseph Priestley he attacked the latter's presentation of Christianity as a rational, unitarian faith that was not too different from Judaism. (Priestley hoped to attract Jews to his liberal reworking of Christianity by minimizing its differences from Judaism.) Anglo-Jewish writers were also more likely to make their voices heard in political matters than the *maskilim*. In 1770, for example, in an English-language pamphlet, Tang denounced the government's persecution of the radical John Wilkes, taking it to task for its repudiation of the democratic will of the people as embodied in Parliament. The moneylender "Jew King," born Jacob Rey (d. 1823), bitterly attacked the landed elite and ministerial policy in pamphlets and radical newspapers.[26] Second, Anglo-Jewish writers were more likely to address issues that mattered to Jews and Christians alike, rather than issues that concerned the Jewish minority alone. They did not write to promote acculturation and integration or to improve Jewish status or to "normalize" relations between Jews and Christians. They wrote, rather, about the conflict between science and religion and between revelation and reason, the reliability of the Hebrew

[25] Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, 57.
[26] For King, see Endelman, *Broadening Jewish History*, ch. 8.

scriptural tradition, the political upheavals in France and their reverberations in England, and the government's abuse of power and corruption of politics. The willingness of these writers to intervene in these debates, without flinching or apologizing, testifies to their sense of security and underscores, by contrast, the timidity of Berlin's *maskilim*, whose reticence mirrored the absence of a public arena for political debate in Prussia, in particular, and in central Europe, in general.

CONCLUSION

The history of Jews in Britain between the resettlement and the end of the Napoleonic Wars illuminates the primacy of non-ideological structures and currents in ushering in the modern period in Jewish history. It suggests that intellectual innovation – the self-conscious, systematic rethinking of Jewishness and Judaism – was not a requirement for widespread transformations in Jewish life, as so many accounts of the origins of Jewish modernity assume. In Britain, unlike in eighteenth-century Germany or nineteenth-century Russia, no Haskalah movement arose to challenge the world of traditional Jewish belief and practice. One potential implication of its absence in the British context is that its importance elsewhere has been overstated. After all, if London's Jews made the transition to modernity without reading the work of Moses Mendelssohn and the *maskilim*, perhaps Jews elsewhere did so as well. In short, the history of Anglo-Jewry in the eighteenth century reopens the question of what drove the transformation of European Jewry at this time. It also questions the weight of state intervention (efforts to reform Jewish education and productivize Jewish occupations) in Jewish modernization and, instead, highlights the role of state indifference and the *absence* of tutelary laws and decrees and meddling officials. It draws attention to broad secularizing currents – such as urbanization, the quickening pace of commerce, the accumulation of wealth, the pursuit of pleasure, and the rise of possessive individualism – that were undermining traditional beliefs and behaviors among Jews and Christians alike. In this sense, Anglo-Jewish history in the long eighteenth century is central to any recounting of how Judaism and the Jews fared when they encountered the modern world.

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CHAPTER 36

THE JEWS IN THE EARLY MODERN CARIBBEAN AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD

WIM KLOOSTER

In the wake of the first Spanish voyages across the Atlantic, men and women of Jewish descent, mainly Portuguese-speaking, began leaving the Iberian Peninsula for the New World. Many generations of these *conversos* found new abodes in American societies that left them little room to express themselves as Jews. In the 1630s and 1640s, scores of them were punished for "judaizing" by the American tribunals of the Spanish Inquisition in Cartagena de Indias, Lima, and Mexico-City. The "judaizers" who remained would largely assimilate or abandon Spanish America altogether. At the same time, the Dutch capture from the Portuguese of Pernambuco in northern Brazil in 1630 held great promise for Jews. The colony founded by the Dutch allowed Jews not only to settle there but to profess their religion openly. The second quarter of the seventeenth century was thus a watershed in the history of Atlantic Jewry. Henceforth, they would largely avoid the Iberian settlements and prefer those of the Dutch and the English.

A NEW START IN BRAZIL

In the eyes of more than a few contemporaries in the Iberian Peninsula and the Iberian colonies, *conversos* and Dutchmen formed an unholy alliance in the early seventeenth century, conspiring together in the Dutch conquest of Brazil's capital of Salvador da Bahia in 1624.[1] Confessions and accusations obtained by the Inquisition of Cartagena de Indias pointed in the same direction. Several witnesses provided information about the *Cofradía de Holanda* (the "Holland Brotherhood"), a crypto-Jewish organization founded to support the Dutch in their naval warfare on the Spanish, which was expected to usher in a religiously tolerant regime in the Americas,

I wish to thank Aviva Ben-Ur, whose advice and encouragement were indispensable in writing this chapter.

[1] Stuart Schwartz, "The Voyage of the Vassals: Royal Power, Noble Obligations, and Merchant Capital before the Portuguese Restoration of Independence, 1624–1640," *The American Historical Review* 96, 3 (1991), 735–62, esp. 751–8.

and – less importantly – to ransom Amsterdam Jews captured by Barbary corsairs. Iberian fear of a Jewish partnership with the mighty Dutch also focused on Buenos Aires, where the Spanish authorities considered sending an inquisitor in the year the Dutch conquered Pernambuco.[2] If there was no lack of *conversos* and Jews who wished the Dutch well, evidence of a vast conspiracy is lacking, however – overall investments in the Dutch West India Company even by Amsterdam's own Jews were modest.[3]

From 1630 onward, many hundreds of Jews and New Christians arrived in Dutch Brazil, constituting the single most important immigrant group by the early 1640s.[4] In Recife and its newly built twin city of Mauritsstad, they opened the first two synagogues of the Americas. Jewish Brazil resembled Jewish Amsterdam, from where most arrivals hailed. They returned to full religious and cultural Jewish life by copying institutions that had recently been established in the Dutch port. Jewish life in Brazil was, however, dealt a blow by an anti-Dutch rebellion that began in 1645. In the following decade, until the Dutch surrender of 1654, virtually all Jews left Brazil.[5]

Ironically, this diaspora from Brazil opened the door to a permanent Jewish presence in the New World – in North America and especially in the Caribbean. Some refugees cast anchor in nearby Barbados; others landed in a storm on the Spanish island of Jamaica, soon to be conquered by an English force.[6] A large contingent of Jews and Dutchmen made their

[2] Anna María Splendiani, *Cincuenta años de Inquisición en el Tribunal de Cartagena de Indias 1610–1660*, 4 vols. (Santafé de Bogotá, 1997), III, 43, 48, 50, 64; Fernando Serrano Mangas, *Armadas y flotas de la plata (1620–1648)* (Madrid, 1990), 369.

[3] Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London, 2000), 109–10; José Antonio Gonsalves de Mello, *Gente da Nação: Cristãos-novos e judeus em Pernambuco 1542–1654* (Recife, 1989), 207–8.

[4] Frans Leonard Schalkwijk, *Igreja e estado no Brasil holandês, 1630–1654* (Recife, 1986), 369–70.

[5] See, for the Jews who remained in Brazil: Bruno Feitler, *Inquisition, juifs et nouveaux-chrétiens au Brésil: Le Nordeste XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Leuven, 2003), 180–9; Jacques Cukierkorn, "*Retornando* – Coming Back: A Description and Historical Perspective of the Crypto-Jewish Community of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil" (rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1994), 35, 39–40. I am indebted to Abraham Peck for the latter reference. Not all Jews survived the exodus from Brazil. Jews predominated among the 120 passengers who perished on a ship wrecked in 1646 near the Isle of Wight en route to the Dutch Republic: H. Doedens to Ant. Van Hilten, Amsterdam, February 7, 1646, in "Origineele brieven van H. Doedens aan Ant. v. Hilten, betreffende de West-Indische Compagnie: 1641–1648. Uit het archief van Hilten," *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap, gevestigd te Utrecht* 25 (5th series), pt. 5 (1869), 395–462, esp. 418.

[6] E. M. Shilstone, ed., *Monumental Inscriptions in the Jewish Synagogue at Bridgetown, Barbados: With Historical Notes from 1630* (Barbados, 1988), xxiii–xxiv; Zvi Loker, *Jews in the Caribbean: Evidence on the History of the Jews in the Caribbean Zone in Colonial Times* (Jerusalem, 1991), 63–6.

way to Martinique, where the Jesuit priests convinced the island's proprietor to refuse them entrance. Traveling on, they landed at Guadeloupe, whose proprietor allowed them to disembark. A few other Jewish families, arriving shortly afterwards from Brazil, were allowed to settle in Martinique.[7]

Most Jewish refugees from Brazil crossed the Atlantic and returned to the Dutch Republic. Some 200 families entered Amsterdam from Brazil in the period 1646–55.[8] But the New World soon lured back those who preferred American space to the overcrowded living quarters in Amsterdam. Jews were also arriving in Amsterdam in large numbers from other directions in the mid seventeenth century, due to the renewed persecution of judaizers by the Spanish Inquisition after 1643, as well as the Khmelnytsky massacres of 1648–52, which created waves of refugees among Spanish *conversos* and Polish and Ukrainian Jews.[9]

Even before the fall of Recife, the first Jewish colonists had arrived in Curaçao. A group of thirteen pioneers in 1651 was followed by a larger number eight years later, which included men who had served as *parnasim* ("communal leaders") in Recife. Jewish males became immediately involved in regional trade, in which subsequent generations were to make their living.[10] By the 1660s, Jewish congregations had also arisen in the Caribbean islands of Martinique, Barbados, and Jamaica, and a Jewish presence has been recorded for Nevis as of 1677–8.[11] In addition, Portuguese Jews made up a large minority among the settlers of the short-lived Dutch Guiana settlements of Cayenne (1656–64), Essequibo, and Pomeroon (1658–66). These Sephardim arrived not only from

[7] J. Rennard, "Juifs et Protestants aux Antilles françaises au XVIIe siècle," *Revue d'Histoire des Missions* 20 (1933), 436–62, esp. 437–9; I. S. Emmanuel, "Les Juifs de la Martinique et leurs coreligionnaires d'Amsterdam au XVIIe siècle," *Revue des Etudes Juives* 123 (1964), 511–16.

[8] Jonathan I. Israel, "Spain and the Dutch Sephardim, 1609–1660," in Israel, *Empires and Entrepots: The Dutch, the Spanish Monarchy and the Jews, 1585–1713* (London, 1990), 355–416, esp. 385.

[9] R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, "Bevolkingsproblematiek in joods Amsterdam in de zeventiende eeuw," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 18 (1984), 134–42, esp. 138; Jonathan I. Israel, "Menasseh ben Israel and the Dutch Sephardic Colonization Movement of the Mid-Seventeenth Century (1645–1657)," in Yosef Kaplan, Henri Méchoulan, and Richard Popkin, eds., *Menasseh ben Israel and His World* (Leiden, 1989), 139–63, esp. 146–7.

[10] Archivo General de Simancas, Estado 8386, fol. 296: Esteban de Gamarra, Spanish ambassador in The Hague, to King Philip IV, December 30, 1660.

[11] Michelle M. Terrell, *The Jewish Community of Early Colonial Nevis: A Historical Archaeological Study* (Gainesville, 2005), 45. See also Natalie Zacek, "'A People So Subtle': Sephardic Jewish Pioneers of the English West Indies," in Caroline A. Williams, ed., *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World: People, Products and Practices on the Move* (Farnham, UK, 2009), 97–112.

Amsterdam, but also from Livorno and Hamburg.[12] Some refugees from these abortive colonies found their way to the English settlement of Suriname, and officially became subjects of the Dutch States of Zeeland following the Dutch conquest of Suriname in 1667.[13] The initiatives spearheading virtually all these new Jewish congregations were taken by men who had previously dwelled in Dutch Brazil. Brazil was also the departure point for the twenty-three refugees who arrived by chance in New Amsterdam, the capital of New Netherland, in 1654. And although none of them became rooted in the city, this year marks the first presence of Jews in North America. (See figure 36.1.)

In absolute numbers, the immigrants were not very impressive. In fact, no Jewish community anywhere in the Americas equaled the combined size of the congregations of Recife and Mauritsstad in Dutch Brazil until both Suriname and Curaçao reached the 1,000 mark in the mid eighteenth century.[14] Martinique numbered 92 Jews in 1682 (on the eve of their expulsion), Barbados grew from at least 184 in 1680 to 228–336 in 1715, and Jamaica from 29 in 1672 to 700 or 800 by 1735; Jamaica could boast at least five synagogues by the 1760s.[15] Throughout the eighteenth century, Suriname and Curaçao housed the largest Jewish populations in the Caribbean and even the entire western hemisphere, forming around one-third of the colonies' white populations. Both colonies lost many Jews during the Napoleonic Wars due to migration, but, by 1830, more Jews still

[12] Livorno: Charles Longland to Secretary John Turloe, Leghorn, March 8, 1658, in John Birch, ed., *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, 7 vols. (London, 1742), VI, 825; Jac. Zwarts, "Een episode uit de joodsche kolonisatie van Guyana (1660)," *De West-Indische Gids* 9 (1927–8), 519–30, esp. 519–20. Hamburg: Hermann Kellenbenz, *Sephardim an der unteren Elbe: Ihre wirtschaftliche und politische Bedeutung vom Ende des 16. bis zum Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1958), 95.

[13] By 1659–60, some thirty Jews lived in Suriname: Susan Heller Anderson, "Cosimo Brunetti: Three Relations of the West Indies in 1659–1660," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (n.s.) 59, 6 (1969), 1–49, esp. 34.

[14] It is not documented when the 1,000 mark was reached in Curaçao, but see Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680–1791* (Assen, 1985), 239. For Suriname, cf. Alex van Stipriaan, "An Unusual Parallel: Jews and Africans in Suriname in the 18th and 19th Centuries," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 31, 1–2 (1997), 74–93, esp. 75. The population of Jewish Suriname reached a high-water mark of 1,330 souls in 1791: J. Wolbers, *Geschiedenis van Suriname*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1970 [1861]), II, 442.

[15] Robert Cohen, "Early Caribbean Jewry: A Demographic Perspective," *Jewish Social Studies* 45, 2 (Spring 1983), 123–34, esp. 124 (table 1), 132; Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York, 1998), 49; Allan D. Meyers, "Ethnic Distinctions and Wealth among Colonial Jamaican Merchants, 1685–1716," *Social Science History* 22, 1 (Spring 1998), 47–81; Jacob R. Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew, 1492–1776* (Detroit, 1970), 123.

Figure 36.1 African slavery in the Americas, *c.* 1770.

lived in Paramaribo, Suriname, than in New York City, and more in Willemstad, Curaçao, than in Philadelphia.[16]

THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF AMSTERDAM

From the first years of Jewish immigration to Amsterdam in the late sixteenth century, trading networks connected the Dutch port to judaizers across the Atlantic Ocean, especially those in Brazil. Without Portuguese Brazil, one historian has written, "there might never have been as substantial a settlement in Amsterdam to begin with," and without Dutch Brazil, Amsterdam's Portuguese Jewish community would never have become as vibrant and versatile as it did.[17] Crypto-Jews from Brazil – like those from Senegal's Petite Côte in another corner of the Atlantic world – routinely undertook the costly and hazardous voyage to Amsterdam or Hamburg to be ritually circumcised. More than a few of them even settled in Amsterdam, took Hebrew names, and received a Jewish education. Among those who had once sojourned in Brazil was Oporto-born Jacob Tirado alias James Lopes da Costa, the founder of Amsterdam's first synagogue.[18] The close connection with Brazil continued after the Dutch conquest of Pernambuco. Aharon Serfaty, the first Portuguese Jew to be circumcised in Amsterdam (in 1597), lived in Dutch Brazil in 1637, returning one year later to Amsterdam, where he would soon become president of the Talmud Torah congregation. In 1646, he moved back to Brazil and was elected president of Recife's Tsur Israel congregation in 1653. He died in Amsterdam in 1670.[19]

Amsterdam was of great importance to the Jewish communities founded in Brazil, the Caribbean, and North America, especially in the initial stages of settlement. Its congregation donated Torah scrolls to New Amsterdam (1655), Barbados (1657), Cayenne (1659), Curaçao (1659), Martinique

[16] Robert P. Swierenga, *The Forerunners: Dutch Jewry in the North American Diaspora* (Detroit, 1994), 62.

[17] Daniel M. Swetschinski, "Kinship and Commerce: The Foundations of Portuguese Jewish Life in Seventeenth-century Holland," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 15 (1981), 52–74, esp. 62.

[18] Feitler, *Inquisition, juifs et nouveaux-chrétiens*, 144; Peter Mark and José da Silva Horta, "Two Early Seventeenth-Century Communities on Senegal's Petite Côte," *History in Africa* 31 (2004), 231–56, esp. 238–9; Mello, *Gente da Nação*, 12–13; José Antonio Gonsalves de Mello, "Gente da Nação: Judeus residentes no Brasil holandês, 1630–54," *Revista do Instituto Arqueológico, Histórico e Geográfico Pernambucano* 51 (1979), 11–233, esp. 67, 147; Maximiano Lemos, *Zacuto Lusitano: A sua vida e a sua obra* (Porto, 1909), 355.

[19] Egon Wolff and Frieda Wolff, *Judaizantes e judeus no Brasil 1500–1808: Dicionário biográfico*, 3 vols. (Rio de Janeiro, 1986–7), I, 65, 178.

(1676), Statia (or St. Eustatius; 1739), and Newport, Rhode Island (1760).[20] The 1638 *ascamot* ("by-laws") of the Amsterdam congregation were the archetype for all seventeenth-century congregations in the New World; in Barbados and Curaçao, even the number of articles – forty-two – followed the Dutch original.[21] By virtue of these by-laws, the *parnasim* were the absolute authorities in the Caribbean communities, whose main task was to promote discipline and conformity.[22]

Amsterdam's example also inspired the *mahamad* ("congregational board") of Recife and Curaçao to elect a special treasurer for the relief of Jews residing in the Holy Land. Caribbean Jews continued their support of Jews in the Holy Land in the eighteenth century, as expressed in the contributions of Barbadians to the Terra Santa fund of London's Sha'ar Hashamayim congregation; in collections in Suriname and Curaçao for Tiberias, Hebron, Safed, and Jerusalem; as well as in individual donations stipulated in wills. One emissary from Hebron even became the rabbi of, first, Curaçao, and then Barbados.[23]

Amsterdam was also the main port of departure for Jewish migrants to the Caribbean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many were born in the Dutch city, others had reverted there to Judaism, and not a few would return to Amsterdam after their New World sojourn.[24] Nor were the connections with Amsterdam severed after Jews put down roots in the Caribbean. A female settler of Barbados once remembered the poor of Amsterdam with 100 guilders, and a Curaçaoan Jew stipulated in his will of

[20] Isaac S. Emmanuel and Suzanne A. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles* (Cincinnati, 1970), 46; Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, 123; I. S. Emmanuel, "New Light on Early American Jewry," *American Jewish Archives* 7–8 (1955–6), 3–64, esp. 21–2; Judah Cohen, *Through the Sands of Time: A History of the Jewish Community of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands* (Hanover, NH, 2004), 5; Holly Snyder, "A Sense of *Place*: Jews, Identity and Social Status in Colonial British America, 1654–1831" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2000), 241.

[21] Günter Böhm, *Los sefardíes en los dominios holandeses de América del Sur y del Caribe, 1630–1750* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), 59n.; Mello, *Gente da Nação*, 279.

[22] Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven, 2004), 12.

[23] Arnold Wiznitzer, "The Minute Book of Congregations Zur Israel of Recife and Magen Abraham of Mauricia, Brazil," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 42, 2 (December 1952), 217–301, esp. 243; Loker, *Jews in the Caribbean*, 125, 126, 198 n. 3; Aubrey Newman, "The Sephardim of the Caribbean," in R. D. Barnett and W. M. Schwab, eds., *The Sephardi Heritage: Essays on the History and Cultural Contribution of the Jews of Spain and Portugal*, 2 vols. (Grendon, UK, 1989), II, 431–73, esp. 450; Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 153–65, 1095–9.

[24] Caribbean-born Jews also settled in Amsterdam. From 1682 through 1808, forty-six Jews born in Curaçao and nineteen born in Suriname married in Amsterdam: Dave Verdooner and Harmen Snel, *Trouwen in Mokum: Jewish Marriage in Amsterdam 1598–1811*, 2 vols. ('s-Gravenhage, n.d.), II, 783, 802.

1754 that 80 pesos were to be sent to the Amsterdam brotherhood Mishenet Zequenim, which provided a home to elderly men free of charge. In 1757, four residents of Suriname and Curaçao were listed as members of this brotherhood.[25]

The Amsterdam *parnasim* saw it as their responsibility to urge coreligionists in the Dutch colonies to enjoy their privileges in peace and not to involve themselves in quarrels or matters of a public nature.[26] Their other self-imposed task was to intercede with Dutch metropolitan authorities on behalf of transatlantic Jewish communities. Heavily involved in the Dutch peace negotiations with Portugal in 1641, they achieved protection for the Jews residing in Brazil from any damage to person or property. Six years later, when a food crisis in Dutch Brazil had reached an alarming level, they persuaded the Dutch authorities to allow them to send a ship laden with provisions to the colony's Jews.[27] Similarly, the Amsterdam *parnasim* were instrumental in the extension of freedom of worship and exemption from Saturday militia duty to Statia's Jews (1730), and successfully defended the presence of Jews in the Guiana colonies of Demerara and Essequibo (1776).[28] Although the bonds with Dutch colonies may have been more natural (Amsterdam supplying all but one of Curaçao's rabbis in the period under review), Talmud Torah also complied with requests from the Portuguese Jewish congregations of English/British Barbados, Jamaica, New York, and Newport for rabbis or *hazanim*.[29]

London, the second mother community to the Caribbean Jews, received its own share of refugees from Dutch Brazil, some of whom moved on to Jamaica or Barbados, often to return again to the city on the Thames. The London congregation served as an intermediary between Amsterdam and the British colonies. With families and business partners on both sides of

[25] Cardozo de Bethencourt, "Notes on the Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the United States, Guiana, and the Dutch and British West Indies during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* [*PAJHS*] 29 (1925), 7–38, esp. 11, 18, 28; Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 1097.

[26] Extract from the resolution of the Dutch States General, July 30, 1748, in *Recueil van egte stukken en bewijzen door Salomon du Plessis en door andere tegens Mr. Jan Jacob Mauricius, als mede de Societeit van Suriname en den selven Gouverneur Mauricius tegen den gemelde du Plessis en andere ingedient en overgelevert*, 5 vols. (n.p., 1752–4), III, 29.

[27] H. Doedens to Ant. van Hilten, Amsterdam, July 19 and August 3, 1647, in "Origineele brieven," 470, 479.

[28] Cohen, *Through the Sands of Time*, 5; Loker, *Jews in the Caribbean*, 145–51.

[29] Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "La circulation du personnel rabbinique dans les communautés de la diaspora sépharade au XVIIIe siècle," in Esther Benbassa, ed., *Transmission et passages en monde juif* (Paris, 1997), 313–34, esp. 317–19, 322; Snyder, "A Sense of *Place*," 205–6.

the Atlantic, London Jews naturally defended the rights of their Caribbean brethren. In 1695, four Jews from London petitioned on behalf of those of Jamaica and Barbados in order to abolish a special tax imposed on them.[30]

The main Jewish center in the Caribbean was Curaçao, where various outsiders returned to Judaism – such as a native of Smyrna who enlisted as a soldier in Spain and apparently converted to Catholicism. After being transferred to the Venezuelan port of La Guaira, he made his way to the nearby Dutch island.[31] Curaçao maintained close ties with all islands harboring Jewish congregations. It usually provided Statia's Honem Dalim with a new *hazan*, and its Jews seem to have contributed substantially to the building (1738–9) of Honem Dalim's synagogue and its rebuilding after a hurricane hit (1772). They also helped to finance the construction of a new synagogue in the Danish colony of St. Croix in 1765. Likewise, the *ascamot* of the Berachah ve-Shalom congregation in another Danish island, St. Thomas, were clearly modeled on those of Curaçao, following the arrival of scores of Jews from the Dutch island around the turn of the nineteenth century.[32]

MESSIANISM

The Americas held a utopian attraction for early Jewish and Christian settlers alike. The members of the Franciscan Order believed that a New Jerusalem would be established on earth after global conversion to Christianity. They actively propagated this millennial belief as missionaries among American natives. Puritan immigrants to English provinces also saw America as part of God's providential design, not only the Puritans who colonized New England but also those arriving in appropriately named Providence Island, off the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua.[33] The Jews who settled in the Caribbean often shared the idea of America as sacred space, as a New World to be spiritually appropriated. But their

[30] Egon Wolff and Frieda Wolff, *A Odisséia dos Judeus de Recife* (São Paulo, 1979), 174–5; Isaac S. Emmanuel, *Precious Stones of the Jews of Curaçao: Curaçaoan Jewry 1656–1957* (New York, 1957), 272–5; Israel, "Menasseh ben Israel," 153; Snyder, "A Sense of *Place*," 103.

[31] Stadsarchief Amsterdam [SAA], Talmud Torah 1028, fol. 869: the *parnasim* of Mikve Israel, Curaçao, to the *mahamad* of Talmud Torah, Amsterdam, May 22, 1750.

[32] John Hartog, "The Honem Daliem Congregation of St. Eustatius," *American Jewish Archives* 19, 1 (April 1967), 60–77, esp. 62; Oliel-Grausz, "Circulation du personnel rabbinique," 323; Cohen, *Through the Sands of Time*, 21–2; cf. Zvi Loker, "Jewish Presence, Enterprise and Migration Trends in the Caribbean," in S. Jeffrey and K. Wilkerson, eds., *Cultural Traditions and Caribbean Identity: The Question of Patrimony* (Gainesville, 1980), 177–204, esp. 185.

[33] J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (New Haven, 2006), 184–9.

interpretation varied significantly from those of Christians. Jewish messianism promised that the sovereignty of the Jewish people would at last be restored. The longing for freedom from persecution by the Spanish or Portuguese Inquisition had been a crucial ingredient in the messianic beliefs of crypto-Jews in the Iberian Peninsula. In their minds, a messianic leader would lead them to a promised land.[34] Although numerous crypto-Jews in Spanish America had messianic convictions, there is no evidence that such sentiments had induced them to settle there. Moreover, it was not until the founding of the Dutch West India Company in 1621 that settlement in the Americas *as Jews* became a distinct possibility. That company was explicitly established as an anti-Iberian war machine which also encouraged the establishment of colonies across the Atlantic. The news of its foundation may have awakened messianic expectations among the Amsterdam Jews, many of whom were eager to see the Iberian countries punished for the persecution of their coreligionists.[35] When Portuguese New Christians and Jews residing in Amsterdam lobbied conspicuously for the conquest of Brazil during the company's start-up years, Calvinist merchant Willem Usselincx detected a messianic drive behind the Sephardic pressure that was brought to bear. Usselincx wrote to the Dutch States General that the Dutch Jews should not be faulted for their desire to conquer Brazil. After all, "they have nothing to lose, but hope that another Cyrus will issue an order to build a Temple where they can expect their imagined Messiah." In Brazil, Usselincx added, they can slaughter their great whale – a reference to the Jewish legend that, after the coming of the Messiah, God had the Leviathan killed and the pious ate its meat – and "eating and drinking at our cost, they can build their rich old pig heaven," an obvious slur.[36]

Messianism and the propagation of Jewish settlement in the Americas were given an important impulse by a one-time resident of Dutch Brazil, Antonio de Montezinos. In 1644, Montezinos arrived in Amsterdam to tell Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (1604–57) the story of his meeting with South American Indians, whom he took for Hebrew-speaking Jews and members of the Ten Lost Tribes. Menasseh believed this was the sign that the coming of the messiah was near. In planning new Jewish settlements in England and the Americas, especially for the persecuted Jews from Iberia and Poland, Menasseh revealed his practical and his messianic side. Such

[34] David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia, 1996), 105.

[35] Cf. Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon, "Introduction," in Menasseh ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel: The English Translation by Moses Wall, 1652*, ed. Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon (Oxford, 1987), 83.

[36] Nationaal Archief, The Netherlands [NAN], Staten-Generaal 5751: Willem Usselincx to the States General, The Hague, February 24, 1623.

migration, he hoped, would accelerate the dispersal of the Jews all over the globe, which was a precondition of the coming of the messiah. Menasseh expounded his views in *Hope of Israel* (1650), a work that attracted a large following. The Jewish community of Curaçao took the book's Hebrew title, *Mikveh Israel*, as its name. The names of the congregations of Bridgetown, Barbados (Nidhe Israel ["Dispersed of Israel"]), Speightstown, Barbados (Zemah David ["Branch of David"]), New Amsterdam (Shearith Israel ["Remnant of Israel"]), and Newport (Jeshuat Israel ["Salvation of Israel"]), also expressed the belief that the worldwide scattering of Jews was to precede the in-gathering.[37] Synagogue architecture points in the same direction.[38]

There seems to have been an elective affinity between the motivation by scores of Sephardim to migrate to American colonies and their earlier or later belief in Sabbatai Zevi as the Jewish messiah.[39] For example, Amsterdam Rabbi Moshe Rephael d'Aguilar (d. 1679), who resided in Dutch Brazil from 1642 until the Portuguese conquest in 1654, was later briefly a follower of the man from Smyrna.[40] The first Jewish settler of Curaçao (in 1651), João de Yllan (1609–96), approached the English king in 1666 at the height of the Sabbatean frenzy, requesting free passage to Jerusalem for him and at least fifty poor Jewish families, "since I behold that God in his mercy has begun to gather in his scattered people and has raised up a prophet for us." Similarly, Spanish-born poet and historian Daniel Levi (Miguel) de Barrios (1625–1701), who traveled to Tobago in 1660

[37] Elisabeth Levi de Montezinos, "The Narrative of Aharon Levi, alias Antonio de Montezinos," *The American Sephardi: Journal of the Sephardic Studies Program of Yeshiva University* 7–8 (1975), 62–83; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 12–13; Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, 123. Ship names are also suggestive. A ship that arrived in the Dutch colony of Cayenne in 1660, probably carrying Jewish settlers, was called *The Land of Promise and Abraham's Offer*. Zwarts, "Een episode," 523.

[38] Rachel Frankel, "Antecedents and Remnants of Jodensavanne: The Synagogues and Cemeteries of the First Permanent Plantation Settlement of New World Jews," in Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450–1800* (New York, 2001), 394–436, esp. 419–20; Laura Arnold Leibman, *Messianism, Secrecy and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life* (London, 2012), 66–76. Leibman exaggerates the scope of messianism in New World history, mistaking conventions for creed and failing to cite the testimony of a single messianic Jew in a period from which thousands of letters have been preserved. For synagogue architecture in the Atlantic world, see also Barry L. Stiefel, with the assistance of David Rittenberg, *Jewish Sanctuary in the Atlantic World: A Social and Architectural History* (Columbia, SC, 2014).

[39] See, for Menasseh's direct influence on Sabbateanism: Jacob Barnai, "Christian Messianism and the Portuguese Marranos: The Emergence of Sabbateanism in Smyrna," *Jewish History* 7, 2 (Fall 1993), 119–26.

[40] S. Berger, *Classical Oratory and the Sephardim of Amsterdam: Rabbi Aguilar's Tratado de la Retórica* (Hilversum, 1996), 10.

with the intention of settling there, later shared the enthusiasm for Sabbatai Zevi.[41] Josiahu Pardo (*c.* 1626–92), a former classmate of Spinoza and believer in Sabbatai Zevi until the latter's apostasy, served as the (first) rabbi of Curaçao and later of Jamaica.[42] Finally, Salamão Gabay, a one-time resident of Recife who later settled in Jamaica, was also a follower of Sabbatai Zevi.[43] In each of these cases, idealistic motives mixed with economic considerations in the migrant's decision to settle across the ocean – both d'Aguilar and Pardo were probably lured by salaries higher than they received in Amsterdam. Poverty was unmistakably the reason why David Machado de Sequeira sought (and was granted) migration to Suriname in 1734 with his family of six. His messianic persuasion is suggested by his active presence in the infant Jewish congregation of Dublin, Ireland, and the foundation by his close relatives of the Jewish community in Madras, India. It is also underscored by his own work in disseminating the criticism that Portuguese priest Antonio Vieira had expressed of the persecution of Jews by the Portuguese Inquisition, which Machado translated into English. One can assume that Machado's messianism was of the kind to which many Portuguese *conversos* adhered, who embraced the apocalyptic "Fifth Empire" announced by Vieira. In Vieira's view, the Portuguese liberation from Spain in 1640 was the start of the Millennium, in which the reformation of (former) *conversos*, especially the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam, was a key element.[44]

[41] See, for Yllan: Wim Klooster, "Networks of Colonial Entrepreneurs: The Founders of the Jewish Settlements in Dutch America, 1650s and 1660s," in Richard Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* (Baltimore, 2009), 33–49, esp. 40–3. The quote is from Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah 1626–1676* (Princeton, 1973), 531–2. See, for De Barrios: Kenneth R. Scholberg, "Miguel de Barrios and the Amsterdam Sephardic Community," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* (n.s.) 53, 2 (October 1962), 120–59, esp. 147; Wilhelmina C. Pieterse, *Daniel Levi de Barrios als geschiedschrijver van de Portugees-Israelietische Gemeente te Amsterdam in zijn "Triumpho del govierno popular"* (Amsterdam, 1968).

[42] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 543; Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 52–5, 60; M. Kaiserling, "The Jews in Jamaica and Daniel Israel Lopez Laguna," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 12, 4 (July 1900), 708–17, esp. 711.

[43] Wolff and Wolff, *Odisséia dos Judeus*, 82–3.

[44] Permission to migrate to Suriname: SAA, Talmud Torah 1029, in folder marked "11," fols. 705, 717. More generally on Machado: David S. Katz, "The Jews of England and 1688," in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tacke, eds., *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford, 1991), 217–49, esp. 234. In his petitions, Machado also mentioned having lived in Brazil for fourteen years. On Vieira and the Amsterdam Jews, see Antonio Saraiva, "Antonio Vieira, Menasseh ben Israel et le Cinquième Empire," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 6 (1972), 25–57; M. Goldish, "Patterns in *Converso* Messianism," in Matt D. Goldish and Richard H. Popkin, eds., *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture,* vol. I: *Jewish Messianism in the Early Modern World* (Dordrecht, 2001), 41–63, esp. 55–6.

Others supported the cause of Jewish settlement in the Caribbean without themselves moving there. Abraham Pereyra (d. 1699) is perhaps the best example. Born probably in Vila Flor in Portugal, he grew up in Spain and took up residence in Amsterdam in 1646. Pereyra rapidly became a very successful businessman there, running a long-distance trading firm and sugar refinery together with his brother Isaac. He apparently corresponded with Montezinos (a fellow native of Vila Flor) and used part of his wealth to found a *yeshiva* in Hebron (1659) that soon became active in spreading Sabbatean ideas. Upon hearing the news that the Jewish messiah had risen, Pereyra apparently sold his house and undertook an abortive voyage to the Holy Land.[45]

Pereyra had been close to Menasseh, who accepted his invitation to serve as the director of a religious school he had founded, and whose books Pereyra helped to spread. In 1647–8, Pereyra was among at least seven Amsterdam Jews invested in the slaving voyage of an English ship from Africa to Venezuela. One of his fellow investors, sailing on board the slave ship himself, was arrested shortly after going ashore in Venezuela. He was brought to the Inquisition in Cartagena, which found among his belongings a Ferrara Spanish Torah as well as three products of Menasseh's printing press: a Talmud, a tiny book on prayers, and the first two parts of the so-called *Conciliador*, a work in which Menasseh showed *conversos* how to reconcile seemingly contradictory passages in the Bible.[46] It is not known whether Pereyra was involved in a similar book trade to Jewish communities in the Caribbean islands, but his firm was unmistakably one of the first to engage in commerce with Jews in Martinique and Curaçao – his nephew established himself as the partner on the latter island. Pereyra never made the move across the Atlantic, but his son Moises, who had also set out in vain for Jerusalem in 1666, settled in Barbados.[47]

[45] Bernardo López Belinchón, "Familia, negocios y sefardismo," in Jaime Contreras, Bernardo J. García García, and Ignacio Pulido, eds., *Familia, religión y negocio: El sefardismo en las relaciones entre el mundo ibérico y los Países Bajos en la Edad Moderna* (Madrid, 2002), 343–63, esp. 354–5; Méchoulan and Nahon, "Introduction," 70; Henry Méchoulan, *Hispanidad y judaismo en tiempos de Espinoza: Estudio y edición anotada de La certeza del camino de Abraham Pereyra, Amsterdam 1666* (Salamanca, 1987), 37, 50–2; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 529–30.

[46] Interrogation of Luís de Chávez, Cartagena de Indias, July 15, September 1, and October 10, 1649, in Splendiani, *Cincuenta años de Inquisición*, III, 245–7. Around 1630, Menasseh himself sent two chests with copies of the *Conciliador* to Brazil and Spain: Cecil Roth, *Life of Menasseh ben Israel: Rabbi, Printer, and Diplomat* (Philadelphia, 1934), 46; Méchoulan and Nahon, "Introduction," 27, 29–30.

[47] Trade with Martinique: SAA, Notarieel Archief 3010, fol. 45, Act of February 24, 1662. Nephew: Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 47; Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 138–40, 215 n. 170; Herbert Friedenwald, "Material for the History of the Jews in the British West Indies," *PAJHS* 5 (1897), 45–101, esp. 58.

DIFFERENT SHADES OF TOLERANCE

Jews in Dutch Brazil and various Caribbean colonies enjoyed privileges that were unknown in most parts of Europe. In Brazil, they were formally granted residential rights and the right to retail trade, which Jews in Amsterdam had not received.[48] The privileges granted by the Dutch metropolitan authorities to the Jews of Essequibo in 1657 went even further than those that had prevailed in Brazil. The local Jews were awarded the same privileges as gentile settlers: not only were they to be given land for the construction of synagogues, schools, and a cemetery, they also would not be asked to appear in court on the Sabbath or any Jewish holiday. These regulations formed the basis for the privileges the English rulers of Suriname bestowed on the local Jews in 1665, which were maintained after the Dutch takeover in 1667 and confirmed in 1669, although the Jews were regularly forced to guard them jealously.[49] Subsequent privileges granted in Suriname included exemption from militia duty on the Sabbath and the freedom to work on Sunday, although the latter was only granted intermittently.[50] The Jews who formed the first genuine congregation of Curaçao in 1659 fitted smoothly into this genealogy of tolerance. They were granted the free exercise of their religion and government protection. More specific privileges were added later here as well, such as the dispensation of guard duty or court appearance on Saturday, and the right to open schools on Sunday.[51]

In Suriname, Jews freely participated in the political process as individuals, nominating – along with all other free males – the members of the ten-man ruling Council of Policy; the governor made the actual appointments. Jamaica's Jews took part in parish elections of government representatives until Christian settlers challenged their right to do so. The ensuing debate led to an unequivocal ban on Jewish voting in 1750. Although the Jews of Curaçao lacked voting rights, four of them did join eight Christians to form an informal political committee of the "discontented," which was active in the shadow of the Dutch Patriot Revolt.[52]

[48] Arnold Wiznitzer, *The Jews of Colonial Brazil* (Morningside Heights, NY, 1960), 99–100; B. N. Teensma, "Resentment in Recife: Jews and Public Opinion in 17th-Century Dutch Brazil," in Jan Lechner, ed., *Essays on Cultural Identity in Colonial Latin America* (Leiden, 1988), 63–78, esp. 75–6.

[49] Samuel Oppenheim, "An Early Jewish Colony in Western Guiana: Supplemental Data," *PAJHS* 17 (1909), 53–70, esp. 55–6, 62–4.

[50] Goslinga, *Dutch in the Caribbean*, 273; Robert Cohen, *Jews in another Environment: Surinam in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, 1991), 125–6.

[51] Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 48, 335.

[52] Snyder, "A Sense of *Place*," 109, 139; G. W. van der Meiden, "Governor Mauricius and the Political Rights of the Jews," in Robert Cohen, ed., *The Jewish Nation in Surinam:*

Corporate rights varied from place to place. The Jews of Recife were granted an official public presence at formal events, such as the reception given to new members of the ruling High Council upon their arrival in Recife in 1646. Similarly, the privileges granted in Essequibo provided for two representatives of the Jewish community to attend "general meetings for the common welfare." And, some 30 kilometers south of Paramaribo, the Jews of Suriname enjoyed virtually complete autonomy in the village of Jodensavanne, the nerve center of the colony's Jewish plantation world and effectively of the entire Jewish community.[53] This was, as a governor (ignoring the slave population) once phrased it, "the only town in the whole world where only Jews lived."[54]

The first Jewish merchants to settle in the English colonies of Jamaica and Barbados aspired to denization so as to conform to the Navigation Acts, which discriminated against foreigners – only English nationals were allowed to take part in trade between the colonies and the mother country. After some hesitation, the English government complied with the merchants' requests by granting numerous letters of denization. But endenized or not, Jews were still targeted by colonial governments for extraordinary taxes to compensate for budget shortfalls.[55] Jewish merchants in Martinique, where they were tacitly allowed to dwell after 1654, managed to induce the authorities to move the weighing of colonial crops from Saturday to Friday. They made their slaves and indentured servants work on Sundays and went about in public during the Christian Holy Week, at least until that was forbidden in 1669. In Cayenne, captured by the French from the Dutch in 1664, a treaty granted explicit protection and religious freedom to the resident Jews.

Historical Essays (Amsterdam, 1982), 49–55, esp. 49–50; Wim Klooster, "Economische malaise, politieke onrust en misdaad op Curaçao in de Patriottentijd," in Maritza Coomans-Eustatia, Henny E. Coomans, and To van der Lee, eds., *Breekbare Banden: Feiten en visies over Aruba, Bonaire en Curaçao na de Vrede van Munster, 1648–1998* (Bloemendaal, 1998), 101–8, esp. 104.

[53] S. P. l'Honoré Naber, "Het dagboek van Hendrik Haecxs, lid van den Hoogen Raad van Brazilië (1645–1654)," *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 46 (1925), 126–311, esp. 187; Cohen, *Jews in another Environment*, 147.

[54] Governor Joan Jacob Mauritius to the States General, September 28, 1748, in *Recueil van egte stukken*, III, 79.

[55] Report of the Council for Foreign Plantations to the King, [July 24] 1661, in W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies,* vol. V: *1661–1668* (London, 1880), 49; George Fortunatus Judah, "The Jews' Tribute in Jamaica: Extracted from the Journals of the House of Assembly in Jamaica," *PAJHS* 18 (1909), 149–77; Snyder, "A Sense of *Place*," 107–8; Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade*, 47, 92. Denization was in practice restricted to wealthy Jews: Governor Sir Jonathan Atkins to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, Barbados, July 4, 1676, in Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers,* vol. IX: *1675–1676 and Addenda 1574–1674* (London, 1893), 422.

Tolerance in the French colonies came to an end in 1685, when King Louis XIV issued the *Code Noir*, which provided for the expulsion of Jews (and Protestants) from all the colonies, following a decree to the same effect issued two years earlier.[56] Jews, however, returned to Martinique or settled in other French colonies, including Saint-Domingue, with the connivance of colonial authorities, although they were nowhere concentrated enough to form a congregation. They enjoyed *de facto* freedom of conscience, but faced some legal obstacles, such as the inability to bequeath their properties to their children, inducing many of them to undergo baptism.[57]

Where Jews enjoyed freedom of religion (*de facto* or *de jure*), they openly celebrated the Sabbath and the Jewish holidays. In a report of 1681, the Jesuit order accused Martinique's Jews of publicly observing the Sabbath, lighting lamps on Friday after sundown, particularly in upper-storey rooms, to announce the Sabbath's advent, observing Passover for eight days, and celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, which seems to have been observed according to rabbinical tradition, save the length of the festival. For this one-week harvest holiday, Martinique's Jews would construct in their gardens or pathways cabins made of branches "which they decorate with flowers and fruits and in which they dwell and eat for fifteen days in view of us Christians, whom they even invite to this celebration."[58] To celebrate the same feast, Barbadian Jews carried in processions branches of the date tree, gilded and dressed with flowers.[59]

In the Dutch colonies, the Jewish festivals were also celebrated publicly and with great enthusiasm, especially Purim, which had held a special significance among *conversos* everywhere because of its theme of secret Jewish identity and eventual deliverance.[60] The festivities displayed during Purim in Jodensavanne, Suriname, resembled Carnival in more ways than one. When Suriname's rural Jews began moving from there to Paramaribo, the traditional rejoicing that accompanied Purim alarmed colonial officials, who complained in 1775 about the common sight during this festival

[56] Gérard Lafleur, "Les Juifs aux îles françaises du vent (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)," *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire de la Guadeloupe* 65–6 (1985), 77–131, esp. 89, 101, 103, 115; Silvia Marzagalli, "Atlantic Trade and Sephardim Merchants in Eighteenth-Century France: The Case of Bordeaux," in Bernardini and Fiering, eds., *Jews and Expansion*, 268–86, esp. 273.

[57] Zosa Szajkowski, "Jewish Migration from Bordeaux during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Jewish Social Studies* 18, 2 (April 1956), 118–24, esp. 120; Marzagalli, "Atlantic Trade and Sephardim," 274–5.

[58] Abraham Cahen, "Les Juifs de la Martinique au XVIIe siècle," *Revue des Études Juives* 2 (1881), 93–122, esp. 119, 121.

[59] N. Darnell Davis, "Notes on the History of the Jews in Barbados," *PAJHS* 18 (1909), 129–48, esp. 147.

[60] Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 378.

of intoxicated, rowdy adult men massively taking to the streets while masked or in disguise and sometimes armed. Purim in Curaçao lasted for eight to ten days, beginning with various ceremonies on the Sabbath before Purim, including the reading of the Book of Esther, and culminating in a display of fireworks.[61]

SHOPKEEPERS, MERCHANTS, AND PLANTERS

Poverty motivated many Jews to try their luck in the Americas, while others were sent by Amsterdam's Talmud Torah congregation by virtue of their indigence. Almost half of the poor Jews "dispatched" from Amsterdam between 1759 and 1814 were shipped off to the Caribbean, in particular to Suriname, Curaçao, and Statia. Those arriving in Suriname accounted for nearly half of all Sephardic immigrants between 1771 and 1795.[62] This migration coincided with a sharp economic downturn which led to the impoverishment of many Surinamese Jews, who as a group were hit harder than Christians. As a result, Jews fell out of favor with Christians. David Cohen Nassy, the community's chronicler, later wrote: "The houses of the Jews were no longer frequented by the Christians, nor were they ever invited to their homes on any festival or any private or public occasion of rejoicing."[63] The board of a theatre founded in the capital in 1775 refused to admit Jews. The professed fear of Jewish poverty, revealing the conditional nature of the acceptance of Jewish settlers, was also a factor in other colonies. When the Dutch States General decided to allow Jews to settle in the Guiana colonies of Essequibo and Demerara in 1776, it was on the condition that they possess at least 500 acres of land "and offer adequate guarantees that their retinue of relatives and servants will not become a public burden."[64] This argument was not always separable from the old antisemitic stereotype of Jews as parasites, which was used to legitimize excessive taxation of Jews in Saint-Domingue and their exclusion from retail trade in Jamaica.[65]

[61] Ordinance of May 24, 1775, in J. A. Schiltkamp and J. Th. de Smidt, eds., *West-Indisch plakaatboek: Plakaten, ordonnantien en andere wetten, uitgevaardigd in Suriname, 1667–1816* (Amsterdam, 1973), 883–4; Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 235, 1088.

[62] Robert Cohen, "Passage to a New World: The Sephardi Poor of Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam," in Lea Dasberg and Jonathan N. Cohen, eds., *Neveh Ya'akov: Jubilee Volume Presented to Dr. Jaap Meijer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Assen, 1982), 31–42, esp. 35; Cohen, *Jews in another Environment*, 23.

[63] [David Cohen Nassy,] *Essai historique sur la colonie de Surinam* (Paramaribo, 1788), 156.

[64] Loker, *Jews in the Caribbean*, 148.

[65] Pierre Pluchon, *Nègres et juifs au XVIIIe siècle: le racisme au siècle des Lumières* (n.p., 1984), 95; Snyder, "A Sense of *Place*," 105–6.

Poor Jews were not the only ones confronted by Christians. Successful merchants were also challenged. The diatribe of sixty-six "common Christians" of Recife, who accused the Jews of lying, deceiving, and thereby monopolizing trade and brokerage, concluded with the recommendation that, as in other countries, Jews should wear red hats or yellow badges.[66] Antisemitism was also evident in the 1781 raid of Statia by a British occupying force under Admiral George Rodney. Over 100 Jewish men, many of them traders, were taken from their homes and confined to a customs house. About 20 men faced temporary exile and all, like the gentiles, saw their warehouses emptied and the contents shipped off in a fleet to England. This episode probably motivated most Jews to leave the island and move on, in particular to Danish St. Thomas.[67]

As Port Jews, the overwhelming majority of Caribbean Jews earned a livelihood in trade, either in retail business or long-distance trade. Most Jamaican Jews were shopkeepers and most Jamaican shopkeepers Jews, who dealt in "damaged salt-butter, herrings, beef, cheese, and in train-oil," which did not exactly make them a fortune.[68] Nor were the majority of Jews elsewhere in the region well-off. Merchants, by contrast, led more commodious lives. They imported European commodities and exported Caribbean crops such as sugar, coffee, tobacco, and cotton. Some of them, primarily in Jamaica and Curaçao, specialized in the re-export of silver, cocoa, or hides from Spanish colonies, especially the areas of today's Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama, where they engaged in a lively illicit trade. Throughout the Caribbean, Jews traded with each other, legally or illegally, and especially voluminously in Curaçao, Jamaica, and Saint-Domingue. Their contacts also extended to the Jews of New York and to coreligionist business partners in London, Amsterdam, and Bordeaux – in the 1730s, close to half of all London merchants trading with Jamaica were Jews. Their commerce was not strictly conducted within the confines of the Empire to which they belonged. Jews from Amsterdam, London,

[66] Hermann Wätjen, *Das holländische Kolonialreich in Brasilien: Ein Kapitel aus der Kolonialgeschichte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (The Hague, 1921), 221, 231; Teensma, "Resentment in Recife," 68; Mello, *Gente da Nação*, 282, 223. The town fathers of Amsterdam had decided in 1605 that Jews did not have to wear special insignia: R. B. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam*, 5 vols. (Amsterdam, 1965–78), II, 172.

[67] Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire* (New Haven, 2013), 298–9, 305; Cohen, *Through the Sands of Time*, 7–11.

[68] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, or General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of That Island with reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government*, 3 vols. (London, 1774), II, 28–9; Stephen Alexander Fortune, *Merchants and Jews: The Struggle for British West Indian Commerce, 1650–1750* (Gainesville, 1984), 81.

Barbados, New York, and Jamaica were accused in 1685 of attempting to bypass the English Navigation Acts and avoid the so-called alien duties by joining hands and registering the cargo under the name of the naturalized Jew from the place at which the ship was landed.[69]

As traders or ship-owners, West Indian Jews displayed some activity in the intra-Caribbean slave trade, but European-based Jews and their Caribbean correspondents were not prominent in the transatlantic slave trade, except for two firms: a Portuguese Jewish business house in Amsterdam that collaborated closely with the Portuguese Cacheu Company, the contractor between 1698 and 1701 of the official monopoly slave trade (*asiento*) to the Spanish colonies; and the Gradis family of Bordeaux, responsible for ten slave voyages in the eighteenth century, mostly to Saint-Domingue.[70]

Jewish trade with Spanish America prospered in spite of the menacing presence of the Spanish Inquisition with its seat at Cartagena de Indias. It was to escape from the Inquisition's clutches that Sephardim had often chosen the Americas as their new abode – three members of Suriname's Portuguese Jewish community stressed in 1785 that Jews had first settled in the colony in 1661 "with the intention to revive the peace that they had lost due to the Inquisition."[71] Few Caribbean Jews actually spent time in Cartagena's Inquisition cells.[72] A perhaps greater threat was posed by the

[69] Fortune, *Merchants and Jews*, 130–50; Wim Klooster, "Contraband Trade by Curaçao's Jews with Countries of Idolatry, 1660–1800," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 31, 1–2 (1997), 58–73; John Garrigus, "'New Christians'/'New Whites': Sephardic Jews, Free People of Color, and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue, 1760–1789," in Bernardini and Fiering, eds., *Jews and Expansion*, 314–32, esp. 317, 319; Katz, "The Jews of England and 1688," 221.

[70] Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade*, 37–9; Snyder, "A Sense of *Place*," 284; Jonathan I. Israel, "The Dutch Republic and its Jews during the Conflict over the Spanish Succession (1699–1715)," in Jozeph Michman, ed., *Dutch Jewish History,* vol. II, *Proceedings of the Fourth Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands 7–10 December – Tel Aviv Jerusalem, 1986* (Assen, 1989), 123; Klooster, "Contraband Trade," 64; Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 76–7, 82–3; Marzagalli, "Atlantic Trade," 278; Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713–1763* (Montreal, 2002), 159–60. In addition to these companies, the Jews David Nassi and Abraham Drago co-owned, along with a gentile Dutchman, the *Groene Viskorf* that shipped enslaved Africans from Gorée (Senegal) to Dutch Cayenne in 1664. See the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database at www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces.

[71] NAN, Sociëteit van Suriname 500, memorandum of Jacob Henriques Barrios Jessurun, David Nunes Monsanto, and Samuel Hoheb Brandon to J. G. Wichers, Governor-General of Suriname and the councilors of the Court of Policy and Criminal Justice, Paramaribo, January 5, 1785.

[72] But see Evangeline Walker Andrews and Charles McLean Andrews, eds., *Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina and Portugal in the years 1774 to 1776* (New Haven, 1921), 137; and Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 82–3.

Spanish privateers who captured Jews on their Caribbean or transatlantic voyages, often followed by imprisonments longer than those meted out to Christian captives, and forcing the intervention of the Dutch States General on behalf of the Curaçao and Amsterdam *parnasim*.[73]

The Jews of the Caribbean thus engaged in typically urban pursuits – in addition to mercantile activities, some were involved in moneylending and real estate. In the insular Caribbean, few resided in the countryside, with the exception of the elite merchants of Curaçao who built or bought country estates where they could retire from their weekday engagements. The size of slave gangs employed in and around the elite's country houses was correspondingly small. Averaging four slaves, these "plantations" produced almost entirely for internal consumption. Various Jews tried to pursue cash crop agriculture, but the island's arid soil and the lack of rainfall defeated their plans. Indeed, particularly severe dry spells prompted local rabbis in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to compose special rain prayers, and one *haham* published a ritual text devoted to such invocations.[74] Outside Curaçao, Jews rarely owned plantations, although a dozen estates were Jewish property in Jamaica at one point or another, and at least a few were in Jewish hands in both Barbados and Martinique by 1680, and probably in Saint-Domingue in the mid eighteenth century. One obstacle in Barbados may have been the official prohibition on Jews who were not endenized owning more than one slave. The island's planters (presumably Christians) would thus be able to use the available blacks.[75]

Prior to the 1770s, Suriname offered a counterpoint to the Caribbean islands. As in the Guiana colonies that briefly housed Jewish communities in the 1650s and 1660s, the Jews of Suriname tended to live on typical Caribbean plantations. In fact, Jews ran a significant part of the colony's agricultural hinterland with the help of slave labor, creating the largest Jewish agricultural community in the world. In all, they ran 115 plantations by 1760, almost one of every five estates. A severe financial and economic crisis, coupled with attacks by runaway slaves, forced many out of the business, leaving only sixteen cash-crop plantations by 1788, by which time most rural Jews (as well as Christians) had moved to Paramaribo.[76]

[73] Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 77, 223–6. [74] Ibid., 66.

[75] Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade*, 51, 65; Gordon Merrill, "The Role of Sephardic Jews in the British Caribbean during the Seventeenth Century," *Caribbean Studies* 4, 3 (October 1964), 32–49, esp. 44–5; Marzagalli, "Atlantic Trade and Sephardim," 274; Garrigus, "'New Christians'/'New Whites,'" 321; Davis, "Notes on Barbados," 137–8. Restrictions on Jewish slave ownership in Barbados were not lifted until 1786: Pedro L. V. Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680–1834* (Kingston, Jamaica, 2003), 121.

[76] Goslinga, *Dutch in the Caribbean*, 362.

Men and women of the Portuguese Nation were familiar with slavery before crossing the Atlantic, having employed enslaved servants of African origin, both blacks and mulattos, in Portugal and their various places of exile. The difference in the Caribbean was the scale of slavery, which influenced the Christian perception of Jewish status. Accepted phenotypically as white, Jews were "somewhat relieved by the primacy accorded race in New World slave-holding colonies."[77] "Somewhat," because, irrespective of their shared whiteness, Jews were still seen by Christians as rivals for wealth and status. Nor were all Jews white. Like Christians, Jewish planters conceived mulatto progeny with slave women. Rarely did they publicly acknowledge paternity of these children, which remained a taboo throughout this period, although they did more often give Jewish names to their own enslaved kin than they did to other slaves.[78]

There is little evidence for planters or other slaveholders converting their slaves (black or mulatto) to Judaism. Some Christians did refer to such conversions in Saint-Domingue, but their argument served a particular agenda and they did not provide proof. Nor were there more than a handful of colored Jews elsewhere in the insular Caribbean – a Roman Catholic pastor in Curaçao noted with some surprise that none of the island's slaves attended Protestant or Jewish religious services, nor were they ever baptized or circumcised.[79] The only exception was Suriname, where evidence suggests that some Jewish fathers did convert their mulatto children. These colored Jews could not become full-fledged members of the congregation. The communal leaders demoted Jewish mulattos to second-class status from the congregation's earliest days, following a practice first adopted in Amsterdam and continued in Dutch Brazil. Darker-skinned converts and their descendants were thus buried in a separate section of the cemetery and excluded from honorary assignments in the synagogue. Suriname's *mahamad*, however, did allow a group of mulatto Jews to found their own brotherhood in 1791, and tried to keep it afloat in 1815, when the board learned that elected officials of the mulatto brotherhood were not fulfilling their duties, and that the group had not convened

[77] Aviva Ben-Ur, "'Distingués des autres Juifs': les Sépharades des Caraïbes," in Shmuel Trigano, ed., *Le Monde sépharade*, 2 vols. (Paris, 2006), I, 279–328, esp. 292; David Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies* (New York, 1972), 195.

[78] Fortune, *Merchants and Jews*, 64; Holly Snyder, "Customs of an Unruly Race: The Political Context of Jamaican Jewry, 1670–1832," in Tim Barringer, Gillian Forrester, and Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz, eds., *Art and Emancipation in Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and His Worlds* (New Haven, 2007), 151–61, esp. 157; Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2004), 241, 244.

[79] Pluchon, *Nègres et juifs*, 97; Joh. Hartog, *Curaçao: Van kolonie tot autonomie* (Aruba, 1961), 395.

for either prayer or administrative meetings for several months. The brotherhood voluntarily disbanded two years later.[80]

If Sephardim had founded Jewish life in the Caribbean in the seventeenth century, Ashkenazim began settling in growing numbers in the eighteenth, setting up their own congregations. It took a long time for the Portuguese Jews to accept marriages between members of their congregation and High German Jews. In Suriname, this only happened in 1813 when the British occupier ordered the abolition of a community rule that degraded intermarried Portuguese Jews to a lesser status.[81] Meanwhile, intra-Caribbean migration among the Sephardim continued, but their transatlantic movement abated in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Jews became firmly rooted in their respective societies, as shown in an increased preference for the use of the local vernacular.[82]

Soon, Jewish Emancipation was on the agenda everywhere. Settlers of the French colonies were the first to benefit, after the National Assembly had set Jewish Emancipation in motion in 1791 and Napoleon decreed the equal status of Judaism with Catholicism in 1808. In 1825, twenty-nine years after the Jews of the Netherlands received equal rights, a Crown order also extended civil equality to the Jews in the Dutch colonies. In Curaçao, Jews resisted some of the implications, because it meant the abrogation of all privileges granted in the mid seventeenth century. The island's governor eventually agreed to uphold certain Jewish privileges, such as the maintenance of a special barn for butchering kosher meat. One year later, in 1826,

[80] NAN, Nederland Portugees Israëlitische Gemeente in Suriname, minuut-notulen van vergaderingen van de Senhores do Mahamad, 1769–181. Robert Cohen erroneously wrote that the brotherhood was established in 1759 and that the *mahamad* later abolished it: Cohen, *Jews in another Environment*, 164–74. See, further, Schorsch, *Blacks and Jews*, 251–3; Aviva Ben-Ur, "Peripheral Inclusion: Communal Belonging in Suriname's Sephardic Community," in Alexandra Cuffel and Brian Britt, eds., *Religion, Gender, and Culture in the Pre-Modern World* (New York, 2007), 185–210. For Amsterdam: Yosef Kaplan, "Political Concepts in the World of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam during the Seventeenth Century: The Problem of Exclusion and the Boundaries of Self-Identity," in Kaplan, Méchoulan, and Popkin, eds., *Menasseh ben Israel and His World*, 45–62, esp. 58–9; Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 188, 206. For Brazil: Arnold Wiznitzer, *The Records of the Earliest Jewish Community in the New World* (New York, 1954), 22.

[81] Wieke Vink, "Creole Jews: Negotiating Community in Colonial Suriname" (Ph.D. diss., Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 2008), 246–9.

[82] R. Cohen, "Patterns of Marriage and Remarriage among the Sephardi Jews of Surinam, 1788–1818," in Cohen, *The Jewish Nation*, 89–100, esp. 91, 96–7; Newman, "Sephardim of the Caribbean," 458.

the Jamaica Assembly decided on civil emancipation of Jews, a law that would require five years to take effect.[83]

Since many Caribbean economies were faltering, the removal of legal disabilities was not as momentous as the introduction of tolerance had been in the seventeenth century. Back then, a variety of privileges had first enabled Jews and Judaism to prosper in the New World. Now emigration began to trump immigration, and in most places Jews and their communities faded away, leaving only the memories of a remarkable era.

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[83] Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 335–8; Snyder, "Customs of an Unruly Race," 159.

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CHAPTER 37

THE JEWS IN EARLY NORTH AMERICA
Agents of Empire, Champions of Liberty

WILLIAM PENCAK

INTRODUCTION

In 1585, Joachim Gaunse or Gans, the first Jew to come to British North America, joined with the abortive Roanoke colony organized by Sir Walter Raleigh. His story exemplifies much of the Jewish experience in early America. In a New World where most immigrants came as indentured servants or poor agriculturalists, the Jews tended to be upper-class and hold special skills. While most were merchants, Gaunse was an accomplished metallurgist and mining engineer. Also, like many other Jews who had lived in two or more countries, Gaunse came from Prague before moving to England in 1581 by special invitation of the Royal Mining Company, despite the fact that Jews had not officially been permitted to reside in England since their expulsion in 1290.[1] Useful Jews would follow in his path where the law was ignored in the interests of the common good: for instance, although Mordecai Sheftall and Francis Salvador did not, as Jews, technically have the right to vote, they were among the leaders of the revolutionary movements in Georgia and South Carolina, respectively, in 1774–5. Salvador was elected to his state's Provincial Congress at the age of 29, and became the first Jew to be killed in the American Revolution in 1775.[2]

Gaunse, like many of his early coreligionists in North America, was a single man. Jewish men, who became peddlers and storekeepers, were frequently the only Jews in their town, just as he was the only Jew on the Roanoke expedition. A large number either did not marry or converted to Christianity when they wed Christian women. Jews were the least married

[1] Michael Feldberg, *Blessings of Freedom: Chapters in American Jewish History* (New York, 2002), 2–3.

[2] B. H. Levy, *Mordecai Sheftall: Jewish Revolutionary Patriot* (Savannah, 1999), 61–2; James Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Ante-bellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 34–6; "Bicentennial Celebration of the Jews of Charleston, 1750–1920," Eleanor Halsey Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

group in what became the United States, with 45 percent of adult men, and 41 percent of women, according to a study of pre-1800 New York, remaining single, as opposed to 16 percent for the Quakers, the second most unmarried denomination. Jews were perhaps the only group besides Indians in early America not to reproduce at an exponential rate – some 3,000 Jews, about one-tenth of 1 percent of the total population of over 3 million, lived in the United States at the time of the first Federal Census in 1790, with Charleston, South Carolina (188) and New York (242) being the largest communities. There were only six *minyans* (groups of ten men required to hold services) in the new United States in 1776. New York and Newport, Rhode Island had services by the 1690s; Savannah, Georgia, briefly in the 1730s and permanently in the 1770s; and Charleston, along with Philadelphia and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the 1740s, with Richmond, Virginia, joining in 1789. The congregations of Lancaster and Newport, however, went out of existence by about 1800. Only with the arrival of thousands of German Jews beginning in the 1820s did the Jewish population rise to about 15,000 in 1830, thereby forestalling the extinction many of them feared and many of their Christian fellow-citizens hoped for, as they believed the conversion of the Jews was a necessary precondition of the Second Coming of Christ.[3]

Also, like a good proportion of the Jews who followed, Gaunse was an important agent of empire. He also took a lead in overseas colonization. Gaunse accompanied the Roanoke expedition in the (vain) hope it would discover precious metals. When he returned, he developed a new means of purifying copper ore that required only four days instead of sixteen weeks. Gaunse's invention was one reason why, in 1588, British bronze cannon were able to decimate the Spanish Armada.[4]

Gaunse also passed into literature, as did at least two of his successors, as antidotes to the traditional stereotypes of Jews – which endured from the Middle Ages to at least the twentieth century – as selfish, conniving, and

[3] Frederic Cople Jaher, "American Jews in the Revolutionary and Early National Period," in Stephen G. Norwood and Eunice G. Pollock, eds., *The Encyclopedia of American Jewish History,* vol. I (Santa Barbara, 2008), 15, 16, 19; Julian H. Preiser, *Pioneer American Synagogues: A State by State Guide*, rev. edn. (Bowie, MD, 1997); Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, 2004), 373; Robert Cohen, "Jewish Families in Eighteenth-Century New York: A Study in Historical Demography," seminar paper, Brandeis University, 1972, 31, copy at American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter, AJA).

[4] Jonathan Israel, *Empires and Entrepots: The Dutch, the Spanish Monarchy, and the Jews, 1585–1713* (London, 1990), 422, 425, 431; Herbert J. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Williamsport, PA, 1937), 124–44; Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750*, rev. edn. (Oxford, 1989), esp. chs. 1, 2, 4, and pp. 161–3, 239–45; Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830*, rev. edn. (Ann Arbor, 1999).

immoral. He was most likely the model for Joabim, the Jewish scientist who helped bring *The New Atlantis* into existence in Sir Francis Bacon's 1627 utopian novel of that name. Similarly, the first American to try to earn his living by writing novels, Charles Brockden Brown, made the fictional Jewish woman Achsa Fielding his heroine in *Arthur Mervyn* (1799). A cultured, humane woman whose family had fled the Inquisition, she provided a cultural and spiritual alternative to the numerous gentiles who deceive the youthful A. Mer[ica]vyn. And Philadelphia's Rebecca Gratz (1781–1869), one of the new nation's foremost philanthropists who remained single her entire life as her beloved was a Christian, was probably the model for Rebecca in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*.[5]

Elite authors' philosemitism was mirrored by that of many European and American political leaders, who defended the Jews for their invaluable contribution to the expansion of empire (and, in the early United States, to the welfare of the republic) when local, populist bigotry threatened them. Gaunse again set the pattern. After his return from America, he taught Hebrew to educated men who wanted to read the Bible in what was then believed to be God's own language. Yet when a local preacher in Bristol, where he lived, asked him, "Do you deny Jesus Christ to be the Son of God?" Gaunse responded, "What needeth the almighty God to have a son, is he not almighty?" Like some of his Jewish successors in the New World, Gaunse's most important recorded words were a defense of his faith and defiance of those who questioned it. When brought to trial, again he did not deny his faith: he "affirmeth and sayeth that he was circumcised and hath been always instructed and brought up in the Talmud of the Jews and was never baptised." Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council, however, which included the major mining magnates who had invited him to the realm, probably saved him: there is no record of a conviction, or of his further life.[6]

FIRST JEWS

Similarities to Gaunse may be found in the most prominent Jew in colonial New Netherland and early New York. Asser Levy – of Vilna, as he signed himself – was not, as has traditionally been believed, one of the refugees who came to New Amsterdam from Brazil in 1654. Rather, as Leo

[5] Lewis S. Feuer, "Francis Bacon and the Jews: Who was the Jew in *The New Atlantis*?" *Jewish Historical Studies* (Great Britain) 29 (1982–6), 1–25; Dianne Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America* (Detroit, 1997); for Judaism in *Arthur Mervyn*, see William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America: 1654–1800* (Ann Arbor, 2005), 249–52.

[6] Feldberg, *Blessings of Freedom*, 2–3.

Hershkowitz, the dean of historians of early New York Jews, has shown, he was one of three Dutch merchants who had preceded them.[7] The Brazilian Jews arrived by a fluke. Jews had comprised at least a third of the 1,500 or so Dutch settlers in Brazil, as the West India Company had encouraged them to develop the wealthy colony after they seized it from Portugal in 1623. There, Jews were both leading merchants and owners of sugar plantations. When the Portuguese ousted the Dutch, a shipload of 23 Jews were first captured by a Spanish vessel, then seized again by a French captain, who dropped them in New Amsterdam after charging them a large sum for which they had to auction off their possessions.[8] They soon left. Levy and some of his fellow merchants were thus the real nucleus of the first Jewish community in North America. Governor Pieter Stuyvesant, speaking for the Reformed Dutch Calvinists who comprised most of the approximately 750 settlers, begged the West India Company to expel them as "hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ," who would soon practice "their customary usury and deceitful trading." The Dutch West India Company would have none of it. It stressed the facts both that "many of the Jewish nation are principal shareholders" and that the Jews of Brazil had "at all times been faithful and have striven to guard and maintain that place, risking for that purpose their possessions and their blood."[9] Levy aggressively pursued both his freemanship of the city and the right to bear arms in the militia: he was successful again, as imperial and elite philo-semitism trumped local prejudice. In the Jewish history of early America, the heroes are the villains of the Whig and Marxist interpretation of history, and vice versa.[10]

[7] Leo Hershkowitz, "By Chance or Choice: Jews in New Amsterdam 1654," *American Jewish Archives* 57 (2005), x–13. His other works on New York Jews are "Wills of Early New York Jews," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 55 (1966), 239–322; 56 (1966), 62–122, 163–207; "The Mill Street Synagogue Reconsidered," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 53 (1964), 404–10; "Some Aspects of the New York Jewish Merchant and Community, 1654–1820," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 66 (1976), 10–34; "Asser Levy and the Inventories of Early New York Jews," *American Jewish History* 80 (1990), 23–55; "Dutch Notarial Records Pertaining to Asser Levy, 1659–1692," *American Jewish History* 91 (2003), 471–83.

[8] See Paul Finkelman, "A Land that Needs People for its Increase: How the Jews Won the Right to Stay in New Netherland," in Pamela Nadell, Jonathan Sarna, and Lance Sussman, eds., *New Essays in American Jewish History* (Hoboken, 2010), 19–50, 488–96.

[9] James Homer Williams, "Abominable Religion and Dutch (In)tolerance: The Jews and Petrus Stuyvesant," *Halve Maen* 71 (1998), 85–91; Morris U. Schappes, ed., *A Documentary History of the Jews of the United States, 1654–1875*, 3rd edn. (New York, 1971), 1–2, 565; Israel, *Empires and Entrepots*, 422, 425, 431; Herbert J. Bloom, *Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam*, 124–44.

[10] Leon Huhner, "Asser Levy: A Noted Jewish Burgher of New Amsterdam," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 8 (1900), 9–23; Hershkowitz, "Asser Levy," and

That Stuyvesant's prejudices were shared by the rank-and-file New York Dutch became abundantly clear when Jacob Leisler overthrew colonial Governor Edmond Andros in the American counterpart to Britain's Glorious Revolution, and ruled New York from 1689 to 1692. Under the proprietary rule of the Duke of York (after 1685, King James II), Jews had been tolerated as part of James's plan to woo non-Anglicans of all sorts in an effort to secure acceptance of his fellow Roman Catholics. But when Leisler seized control, his provisional government required each inhabitant to swear an oath "to maintain and defend to the utmost of my power and person and estate the true Protestant Religion against Popery and all Papist Superstition, Idolatry, or Innovation." Either intentionally or accidentally – there were fewer than 100 Jews in New York at the time – Jews were excluded from the body politic. When Governor Henry Sloughter arrived in 1692 and executed Leisler, the rights of the Jews were restored, the third time New York Jews received from overseas powers the privileges local inhabitants denied them.[11] Throughout the eighteenth century, New York Jews could vote and hold public office, although none were elected to prominent posts. When the New York State Constitution of 1777 became the first document in the western world formally to proclaim that "free Toleration be forever allowed in the state to all denominations of Christians without preference or distinction and to all Jews, Turks, and Infidels," it simply institutionalized what had been practiced for a century.[12]

Pennsylvania's first Jew, Isaac Miranda, had a similar odyssey. An Italian, he moved first to England and then to Philadelphia and Lancaster between 1710 and 1715. After making his fortune on the frontier trading with the Indians, a major source of Jewish wealth in the New World, he converted to Christianity and was appointed deputy-judge of the local admiralty court. But he could gain only backhanded respect in Pennsylvania society: Province Secretary James Logan dubbed him "the apostate Jew or fashionable Christian," and even though he offered James

"By Chance or Choice"; Malcolm H. Stern, "Asser Levy – A New Look at Our Jewish Founding Father," *American Jewish Archives* 26 (1974), 66–77.

[11] "Form of Association Proposed to the Inhabitants," Jacob Leisler Papers, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University, available at http://pages.nyu.edu/~dwvi/jun-1689-.html; Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, 127–31; David de Sola Pool and Tamar de Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World: Portrait of Shearith Israel, 1654–1954* (New York, 1955), 34–5.

[12] Max Kohler, "Civil Status of the Jews in Colonial New York," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 6 (1897), 84–99; Charles Z. Lincoln, ed., *The Constitutional History of New York from the Beginnings of the Colonial Period to the Year 1905*, vol. I (Rochester, 1905), 421; Richard B. Morris, ed., *John Jay: The Making of a Revolutionary* (New York, 1975), 392–5.

Hamilton, a wealthy Philadelphian – whose father Andrew defended John Peter Zenger in the famous libel trial of 1735 – a large inheritance if he would marry his daughter, James turned him down. No matter what he did, his contemporaries still considered him Jewish, setting the precedent that, while it was possible for Jews to lose their religion, it was much more difficult for them to lose what we would call their ethnicity, what the early modern era loosely referred to as their "race" or "nation."[13]

It seems it was easier for Jews to "pass" in the South. Not only was Joseph Ottolenghe (*c.* 1711–75), another converted Italian Jew, the superintendent of silk culture for the province of Georgia, a justice of the peace, and an Anglican missionary who tried to convert slaves (all appointed posts), but also the voters elected him to the assembly for twenty years.[14] In South Carolina, too, convert Moses Lindo, who lived in Charleston from 1756 until his death in 1774, was the chief inspector of all dyes and drugs for British North America, South Carolina indigo being by far the most valuable of these. Yet he identified with his Jewish heritage, contributing to the College of Rhode Island, the future Brown University, because "it had no objection to . . . the youth of *our nation* [italics mine]." (Jews were alternatively, and without much thought, considered a race or a nation when the former term had yet to attract efforts to make it scientifically precise.) So did most converts – notably Philadelphia Democratic-Republican leader Israel Israel in the 1790s – when they refused to change their names and still defended ethnic Jews, converted or not, as good citizens, from antisemitic charges.[15]

Even more critical was the role played by Samuel Nunes Ribiero. Georgia's trustees planned their colony, founded in 1733, as a utopian experiment that would put prisoners and the poor to work under the government's aegis, and they solicited help from wealthy British Jews. This involvement proved unpopular with gentiles, however, and the invitation to Jews to apply to be settlers was revoked. The Jewish promoters, however, presented the colony with a *fait accompli* by sending over forty-two immigrants. They constituted about a quarter of the infant colony's population, and at once earned the favor of Governor James

[13] Richard Brilliant, *Facing the New World: Jewish Portraits in Colonial and Federal America* (New York, 1997), 37; Edwin Wolf II and Maxwell Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia, 1956), 33, 63.

[14] John C. Van Horne, "Joseph Solomon Ottolenghe (c. 1711–1775): Catechist to the Negroes, Superintendant of the Silk Culture, and Public Servant in Colonial Georgia," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 125 (1981), 398–409.

[15] Joseph R. Rosenbloom, *A Biographical Dictionary of Early American Jews* (Lexington, 1960); Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 42–4, 47–50, 55, 112; Moses Lindo to Sampson and Solomon Simpson, April 17, 1770, and other items: Moses Lindo file, AJA.

Oglethorpe when Ribiero – the former personal physician of the Grand Inquisitor of Portugal, who had been forced to flee when his secret Judaism was discovered – single-handedly ended an epidemic that was decimating the colony. He used traditional Jewish homeopathic medical practices such as cool baths and drinks – probably because of Iberian Jewish medical practices, a disproportionate number of colonial Jews lived into their eighties and nineties.[16]

Complaints about the Jews from the Georgia trustees soon ended as well: in 1741 the head trustee, the Earl of Egmont, commented that the Jews had "behaved so well as to their morals, peaceableness, and charity, that they were a reproach to the Christian inhabitants." At the same time, the young John Wesley – the Anglican minister and future founder of Methodism who briefly resided in Georgia in 1736 and 1737 – and Johann Boltzius – the Lutheran pastor who accompanied German immigrants from Salzburg and lived there from 1735 until 1765 – turned against the Jews after they mistook their initial friendliness for a desire to convert to Christianity. Boltzius, like many antisemites, did not trouble himself that his prejudices contradicted each other: besides criticizing the Jews' sharp economic dealing, and "adultery and fornication," he managed to blame them for their exclusivity by keeping kosher – "they would rather starve than eat meat they do not slaughter themselves" – while at the same time being too willing to indulge in "drinking, gluttony, and dancing" with "people of all nations, races, and religion" at the tavern of the Jew Philip Minis. (Boltzius only mentioned in passing that the same behavior occurred at the two taverns owned by gentiles.)[17]

Nearly all Georgia's Jews were Sephardic Jews, and fled the colony in 1740 when war with Spain broke out, fearing that if they were captured they would be put to death by the Inquisition. Only the two Ashkenazic, or

[16] B. H. Levy, "The Early History of Georgia Jews," 166–75, in Harvey H. Jackson and Phinizy Spalding, eds., *Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia* (Athens, GA, 1984); Malcolm H. Stern, "New Light on the Jewish Settlement of Savannah," repr. in Abraham J. Karp, ed., *The Jewish Experience in America*, vol. I (New York, 1969), 66–92; Robert Jutte, "Contacts by the Bedside: Jewish Physicians and Their Christian Patients," in Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia and Harmut Lehmann, eds., *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish–Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1995), 137–50; Saul Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry, 1733–1983* (Savannah, 1983).

[17] Mills Lane, ed., *General Oglethorpe's Georgia, Colonial Letters, 1733–1743* (Savannah, 1975), 516, also 521, 541. John C. English, "John Wesley and His 'Jewish Parishioners': Jewish-Christian Relationships in Savannah, Georgia, 1736–1737," *Methodist History*, 36 (1998), 200–27; George Fenwick Jones, "A Letter by Pastor Johann Martin Boltzius about Bethesda and Marital Irregularities in Savannah," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 84 (2000), 292.

German, Jewish families remained: the Minis and Sheftall families. Unlike the Jews anywhere else in America, they were among the colonial elite from the very first. Members of the Nunes Ribiera family (who returned in the 1750s) became Indian interpreters and royal customs officials. Today, Minis and Sheftall descendants remain prominent Savannah citizens.[18]

ELITE AND IMPERIAL JEWS

Wherever they lived, Jews participated in many elite institutions. In highly disproportional numbers, they were Masons in all the colonial cities where they lived and sometimes Masters of the Lodge. These non-denominational, middle- and upper-class male societies considered all members equal "brothers" who believed in a common Supreme Being as they dedicated themselves, at least in theory, to the improvement of the human race through reason. Upper-class Jews belonged to Philadelphia's Dancing Assembly and Benjamin Franklin's Library Company. In Newport, they were members of the Redwood Library. Jews attended the Colleges of Philadelphia and Rhode Island: Gershom Moses Seixas, the *hazzan*, or *de facto* rabbi, of New York's Shearith Israel, served as a trustee of Columbia College from 1784 to 1816. Judah Monis taught Hebrew at Harvard College from 1722 until 1760, although New England's hostility to all who were not Reformed Protestants ensured Boston had no Jewish congregation until the nineteenth century.[19]

During the "Golden Age" of Newport, Rhode Island (1750–75), nearly all of the city's twenty-five Jewish families were in the top 10 percent of

[18] George Fenwick Jones, "Sephardim and Ashkenazim Jewish Settlers in Colonial Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 85 (2001), 524–31. I met several Sheftall and Minis descendants when I gave a talk for the Coastal Heritage Society in Savannah in October, 2007, including the possessor of the "cocked hat" Sheftall Sheftall, a revolutionary war hero, wore until his death at age 87 in 1847 (he was a raconteur of eighteenth-century and Jewish history). B. H. Levy's son informed me the stones in the Sheftall family cemetery (which became the town Jewish cemetery in the 1770s) were dug up and used for house steps, then recovered by his father and replaced, although at random.

[19] Samuel Oppenheim, "The Jews and Masonry in the United States before 1800," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (1910), 42–9; Leon Huhner, "Jews in Connection with the Colleges of the Original Thirteen States prior to 1800," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 19 (1910), 120–4; R. William Weisberger, "Freemasonry as a Source of Jewish Civil Rights in Late Eighteenth-Century Vienna and Philadelphia," *East European Quarterly* 34 (2001), 409–45; Morris Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport* (New York, 1936), 51, 52, 168–70; Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Handsome Young Priest in the Black Gown: The Personal World of Gershom Seixas* (Cincinnati, 1970); Michael Hoberman, *New England / New Israel: Jews and Puritans in Early America* (Amherst, 2012).

taxpayers, and Aaron Lopez paid twice the tax of anyone else in town. Lopez was the town's leading slave trader, owning wholly or in part twenty ships that brought in about 3,000 slaves to the southern colonies. But slavery was only a small part of the Newport Jews' extensive trade, and Newport Jews were only responsible for a small part of the slave trade. Eli Faber's meticulous research has completely disproven the canard that the slave trade anywhere was primarily Jewish, while showing Jews joined in as minority participants wherever they were leading merchants.[20] Lopez also manufactured snuff and was one of the first manufacturers of spermaceti candles as part of his extensive whaling business. He was active in funding the Touro Synagogue, Redwood Library, and College of Rhode Island.[21]

Yet when, in 1762, Lopez applied for naturalization and the right to vote as a British citizen, under a law passed by Parliament in 1740 to encourage emigration to the colonies, the Rhode Island assembly – the legislature of the most democratic colony, where every office holder from the governor on down was elected annually by all the eligible members of a constituency – turned him down. When he appealed to the colony's superior court, they agreed with the assembly, stating the naturalization law was for "increasing the number of inhabitants in the plantations, but this colony being already so full of people that many of his majesty's good subjects . . . had removed," there was no need to naturalize more people. Opposition to Lopez may have been antisemitic, or it may simply have reflected the fact that the assembly was dominated at that moment by farmers and the more democratic town of Providence, whereas Lopez would have voted with the more aristocratic merchants of Newport: in Rhode Island in the 1760s, most colony-wide elections were won by tiny margins, sometimes as little as 1 vote out of nearly 4,000 cast, and a Jewish vote or 2 on the Newport side could make a big difference. At any rate, Lopez had no trouble gaining his naturalization in Massachusetts – where he owned property and could thus claim residence – as his petition was granted by a superior court that included future loyalists Peter and Andrew Oliver and Thomas Hutchinson. Again, an elite was accepting of Jews while a populist body rejected them. In any event, when Newport's wealthy merchants proved reluctant to oppose British measures, beginning with the 1765 Stamp Act, and to follow Boston's lead, Massachusetts leader James Otis

[20] Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York, 1999).

[21] Elaine Forman Crane, *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era* (New York, 1985), 24–9; Stanley F. Chyet, *Lopez of Newport: Colonial American Merchant Prince* (Detroit, 1970), 42–55; Sara Deutsch, "The Elusive Guineaman: Newport Slavers, 1735–1774," *New England Quarterly* 55 (1982), 229–53; Virginia P. Blatt, "And Don't Forget the Guinea Voyage: The Slave Trade of Aaron Lopez of Newport," *William and Mary Quarterly* (3rd ser.) 32 (1975), 601–18.

was quick to blame this on the city's Jews. During the Revolution, Lopez lost a large whaling fleet, and in general tried to remain neutral: he adopted the identity of either side when it was convenient, and moved to Leicester, Massachusetts, to avoid the British occupation and devastation of Newport from 1776 to 1779. Ironically, returning there in 1782, he drowned in a pond while watering his horse: a man who owned so many ships had never learned to swim.[22]

The most important Jews who assisted the British Empire in North America were a circle of relatives and friends associated with the Franks family of New York and Philadelphia. Members of the Franks and Levy families, who migrated from Germany to England to New York, and Gratz brothers Barnard and Michael, who had been born in Silesia and tried their fortunes in India, the West Indies, and Britain before coming to Pennsylvania, formed the core of Philadelphia's Jewish community. From 1760 until the end of the American Revolution, the victualing, clothing, and arming of British troops in North America was entrusted to a London syndicate which included Moses Franks as one of its four members. Son of the wealthy merchant Jacob Franks of New York, he had been sent to London to learn commerce from his uncle. Franks then turned supplying the army into a family business. His brother David Franks and gentile former mayor of Philadelphia William Plumsted took charge of the contracts in Pennsylvania: they in turn subcontracted their business on the frontier to Jews Joseph Simon, the richest man in Lancaster, his son-in-law Levy Andrew Levy, and gentile William Trent, the three men who collectively built the first store in Pittsburgh. In New York, Moses's father Jacob Franks and two gentiles, David's brother-in-law Oliver Delancey and John Watts, handled matters.[23] While Franks tolerated Delancey, his wife Abigail refused ever again to speak to either her daughter Phila, who married him, or her son David (who married an Anglican in Philadelphia). This bigotry hardly matched her social life, which included mingling and educating her children with the elite of New York society, while despising the town's other Jews as beneath her.[24]

Three of the four merchants who supplied the British army in Canada were also Jews, two of them Franks's cousins, including the first Jew known to have resided in Quebec City, Abraham Jacob Franks, who went there in

[22] Chyet, *Lopez of Newport*, 34–41, 192–5; David S. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760–1776* (Providence, 1958), 5–50, 76, 204.

[23] Mark Abbott Stern, *David Franks: Colonial Merchant* (University Park, PA, 2010); also the *Letter Book of John Watts, 1762–1765*, Collections of the New-York Historical Society 61 (New York, 1917); and Sylvester K. Stevens, Donald H. Kent, and Louis Waddell, eds., *The Papers of Henry Bouquet*, 6 vols. (Harrisburg, PA, 1951–72), vols. IV–VI.

[24] Edith Belle Gelles, *The Letters of Abigail Levy Franks, 1733–1748* (New Haven, 2004).

1767. His son, David Salisbury Franks, became head of the Montreal Jewish community, founded by four ex-army officers who had accompanied British General Sir Jeffrey Amherst when he conquered that city in 1760. It numbered 200 members by 1768, when they founded the first synagogue in Canada, Shearith ("the remnant of") Israel. David Salisbury Franks moved to Philadelphia in 1774, joined the resistance to the British "Intolerable" Acts against the American colonies, and became a military officer and diplomat of the new United States. All in all, Britain largely entrusted the expansion and preservation of its newly acquired empire in America to Jewish merchants.[25]

PRELUDE TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: JEWS DIVIDED

A new type of Jew, however, came to America in the 1760s, as part of the wave of immigrants who arrived after the French and Indian War. While there had always been some poor Jews in the colonies, they had not called attention to themselves. But the new Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe, who wore beards, always kept their heads covered, wore long shawls instead of trousers or knee britches, and could barely speak English in some cases, compromised the reputation carefully cultivated by well-to-do Jews who were physically and sartorially indistinguishable from gentiles. Established Jews therefore applied to the newcomers the same stereotypes gentiles applied to Jews in general. "We are plagued with a new parcel of Jews," Philadelphia's Mathias Bush wrote to Barnard Gratz while the latter was in Britain, "pray prevent, what is in your power to hinder, any more of that sort to come." Some of the newcomers were in fact scoundrels – like Meyer Levy, who in 1760 appeared in Pennsylvania to sell over £2,000 of goods he had stolen in New York, or Emmanuel Lyon who persuaded Jews to give him money on the pretense he was a "great scholar and well versed in the Hebrew tongue." Although they conducted their services in Hebrew, few Jews actually understood it, and there was no real rabbi in America until the nineteenth century.[26]

By the late 1760s in Philadelphia and the late 1780s in Charleston, two separate Jewish congregations existed: one representing the more assimilated

[25] Michael Brown, *Jew or Juif? Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo Canadians, 1759–1914* (Philadelphia, 1987).

[26] Mathias Bush to Barnard Gratz, November 7, 1766, Gratz Papers, ser. 1, vol. 9, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, copy at AJA; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 19, 1772; Jacob Rader Marcus, *American Jewry: Documents, Eighteenth Century* (Cincinnati, 1959), 399–401.

Jews; the other, the newcomers. In New York, although Shearith Israel somehow remained united, the quarrels there were the worst of all. Old members loudly mocked the length of the newcomers' prayer shawls during services, and then took their disputes outside where they physically fought each other. Jewish merchants sued each other for absurd amounts of money (up to £10,000) based on accusations of cheating and damaging each others' reputations. They bickered over who had precedence in reading the Torah; physically removed women from the prestigious front bench of the upstairs women's gallery – the only seats from which they could view as well as hear the services; and even set their quarrels before the provincial courts to determine who were the lawful members of the synagogue who had the right to eject their opponents. Some went as far as accusing others of a widespread conspiracy to murder their opponents.[27]

In anticipation of the American Jewish community of the late nineteenth century, the parties to this dispute have sometimes been considered as Sephardim (assimilated, mostly Iberian) and Ashkenazim (eastern European newcomers), but in fact, while all the established congregations followed the Sephardic ritual, most of their members had come from Germany or eastern Europe as well. One incident illustrating the animosity between assimilated and unassimilated Jews occurred during the American Revolution. In 1782, Benjamin Nones, a Sephardic Jewish merchant and war hero who escaped from British-occupied Savannah to Philadelphia, became involved in a newspaper spat with Abraham and Eleazar Levy, who arrived in Philadelphia from Poland around 1765. Claiming they cheated him, Nones threatened to shave Abraham's beard, "which induces many people falsely to imagine him a distinguished member of our congregation." Levy for his part claimed to be "educated in the Hebrew language" unlike the relatively unlearned Nones. Nones was claiming the Levys were not good Americans, while the Levys contended Nones was not a good

[27] Wolf and Whiteman, *Jews of Philadelphia*, 54, quoting Jacob Henry to Barnard Gratz, January 7, 1771, McAlister Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Solomon Breibart, "Two Jewish Congregations in Charleston, South Carolina before 1791: A New Conclusion," *American Jewish History* 69 (1980), 360–3; Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 14, 60–8; Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Papers, memorial of January 27, 1775, Box 1, folder 54, AJA; Naphtali Phillips, "Unwritten History [of Shearith Israel]," *American Jewish Archives* 6 (1954), 82–95; "Minute Book of Shearith Israel," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 2 (1911), 82–5, 91, 103–5; "Deleted Minutes of Shearith Israel," pages keyed to pp. 73, 94, 99, 100, 114–17 in published minutes, New York file, AJA; *Josephson* v. *Simpson, Hays* v. *Seixas*, and *Simpson* v. *Hays*, New York file, "Lawsuits Involving Jews, 1769–1772," from John Tabor Kemp Papers, New-York Historical Society, copy at AJA.

Jew. A bemused gentile commented in the press: "you may rest assured that no Christian, for the sake of settling your dispute, will be at the trouble of studying the Talmud, the commentaries upon it, together with the books of controversy which relate to your religious ceremonies and customs." All the antagonists had managed to do was confirm Christians' beliefs that they were overly wedded to the minutiae of an archaic faith, albeit as a pretext for personal financial gain.[28]

The Revolution increased Jews' involvement in the political sphere, and ultimately their political rights as well, but at the price of increased antisemitism. Jewish merchants signed protests against the Stamp Act and the non-importation agreements in the 1760s. Colonel Solomon Bush of Pennsylvania held the highest post of any Jew in the Continental Army; at least twenty-six Charleston Jews served in what was known as the "Jew Brigade"; Major Francis Salvador of South Carolina was the first Jew killed in the war; Haym Salomon was an effective spy and made invaluable currency transfers and loans to stabilize the new nation's finances in the early 1780s. Charleston, Savannah, and Philadelphia Jews were almost unanimously pro-Revolution, New York's were divided, and Newport's were mostly loyalist, much like the gentile elites of those communities.[29] But, wherever Jews were around, Patriots blamed them for their compatriots' loyalism, as James Otis did for Newport's foot-dragging on non-importation. Furthermore, because they were wealthy and identified with the elite, Jews became targets of lower-class elements who battled the upper class for political power at the state level during the Revolution, even though the Jews themselves were hoping that their patriotic endeavors would win them full political rights as well.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY PARADOX: SIMULTANEOUSLY INCREASING ANTISEMITISM AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Populist antisemitism became politicized as politicians seeking votes and support appealed to folk prejudices against the Jews to win general favor. The Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1776, which produced what has widely (and erroneously) been regarded as the most democratic

[28] Abraham Levy file, newspaper articles published in the *Independent Gazeteer* and *Chronicle of Freedom*, October 10, 22, 24, 30, and November 11, 1782, AJA.

[29] Jonathan Sarna, "Impact of the American Revolution on American Jews," *Modern Judaism* 1 (1981), 149–60; Samuel Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots: Jews and the American Revolution* (Westport, CT, 1975).

code of laws during the Revolution, is a perfect illustration. Pennsylvania Jews unanimously supported the American Revolution, sharing a double victimization with the Philadelphia lower classes and people of the western counties in that they could not participate meaningfully in either provincial or imperial politics as voters and officials. Yet when the "radicals" overthrew the conservative proprietary government that refused to endorse independence, they wrote into their constitution an oath of allegiance that disenfranchized perhaps half the state's voters: not only Jews, but also Quakers and all those who in conscience would not swear an oath of loyalty on a Christian Bible to a controversial new constitution.[30]

The driving force behind the Christian oath was Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the leading Lutheran clergyman in America who was suspected (correctly, it later turned out) of loyalist sympathies. One development during the Revolution was that people whose own loyalty was doubtful would attempt to divert attention from the accusations against themselves by projecting them onto Jews. Muhlenberg tried to get the other Philadelphia ministers to support him, but Anglican Jacob Duché (at that time a patriot) and Presbyterian Francis Alison were content with a mere acknowledgment of divine providence; only the German Reformed minister Caspar Weyberg, whose English was not good, agreed with Muhlenberg. Muhlenberg next went to the newspapers, arguing that

> an Episcopal church, a Presbyterian meeting-house, a Roman Catholic church, a mosque, a synagogue, a heathen temple have now in Pennsylvania all equal privileges! Will it not be an asylum for all fugitive Jesuits [the order had recently been expelled from Spain and Portugal] and outcasts of Europe . . . If blasphemers of Christ and the Holy Blessed Trinity, despisers of the revelation and the holy bible may hold public office . . . Wo unto the city! Wo unto the land!

Scarcely three months after the Declaration of Independence, Pennsylvania's state constitution marked a significant triumph for bigotry and for those who sought to mold the United States into a Christian republic.[31]

One unexpected supporter of the Christian oath was Benjamin Franklin, who had only returned from England the previous year after

[30] Wolf and Whiteman, *Jews of Philadelphia*, 81; *Philadelphia Evening Post*, September 26, 1776. Owen S. Ireland, *Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics: Ratifying the Constitution in Pennsylvania* (University Park, 1995) has been instrumental in calling attention to the undemocratic, authoritarian features of the Pennsylvania Constitutionalist/anti-Federalists.

[31] *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert and Jon W. Doberstein, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1945), II, 737–43; "Letter of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, October 1, 1776," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 22 (1898), 129–31.

trying, unsuccessfully, to have Pennsylvania made into a royal province, with himself as the most likely governor. Franklin had no trouble sailing with the winds of antisemitism, despite his personal friendliness toward Jews, to ingratiate himself with the new revolutionary government, which chose him as its president. He cast a more favorable light on his actions in a letter to the British scientist Joseph Priestley (a Unitarian), stating that he had effected a compromise that "no further or more Extended Profession of Faith" than "mere Christianity should ever be exacted."[32]

Pennsylvania radicals did not confine their prejudices to paper. David Franks, employed by the British government during the occupation of Philadelphia in 1777 and 1778 to supply British troops, was also employed by Congress to feed and clothe British prisoners of war. Franks ran short of money from the British and used his own, but finally lost patience and cut off the supplies. Meanwhile, he was twice charged with treason, first against the federal government and then against Pennsylvania, although he was acquitted both times. The evidence was flimsy: two letters he wrote to his brother Moses informing him of the high price of provisions in Pennsylvania (hardly a secret) and expressing joy that their mutual friend William Hamilton had also been acquitted of treason. That Franks's daughter married a British officer and was one of the belles of the Meschianza, the farewell party for General William Howe and the departing forces, did not help his image, though. Despite not-guilty verdicts, Franks was forced out of town by popular pressure in 1780. Although he could have lived comfortably in London for the rest of his life, he returned in 1785 when the political climate changed. He died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, but the Jewish congregation refused to allow his burial in their cemetery, although he had been a faithful and contributing Jew all his life, because he had married an Anglican and raised his children in that faith.[33]

Episcopal Bishop William White buried Franks in Christ Church's graveyard, just a week after he had interred David Salisbury Franks there. The latter had been a revolutionary war major who had come to Philadelphia from Montreal to join the resistance to England in 1774. He too had suffered from guilt by association, and had been court-martialed because he had been

[32] Morton Borden, *Jews, Turks, and Infidels* (Chapel Hill, 1984), 11, quoting Albert H. Smyth, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 10 vols. (New York, 1905–7), IX, 266–7.

[33] See Stern, *David Franks*; also see Cecil Roth, "Some Jewish Loyalists in the American War for Independence," in Abraham Karp, ed., *The Jewish Experience in America,* vol. I: *The Colonial Period* (Waltham, MA, 1969), 307–8; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, January 12, 1780, and November 1, 1780; Rebecca Franks to Anne Harrison, February 26, 1778, *American Jewish Archives* 27 (1975), 142–4; Becky (Franks) Johnson to Williamina Bond Cadwallader, February 19, 1784: "Dear Mrs. Cad: A Revolutionary War Letter of Rebecca Franks," ed. Mark Stern, *American Jewish Archives* 57 (2005), 15–24.

an aide to Benedict Arnold, a leading American general who had gone over to the British. Franks was cleared and performed valuable diplomatic services in Europe, including negotiating the new nation's commercial treaty with Morocco.[34]

Despite their patriotism, Jews came in for criticism in newspapers published in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Georgia. They had supported the Revolution almost to a person in these states; former loyalists sought to deflect hostile attitudes away from themselves and toward Jews. For the first time, Jews (or those who spoke in their name) answered these challenges in the public prints and insisted that they were entitled to equal rights in the new republic. In 1784, Haym Salomon, or (most probably) a surrogate who used his name, took on Miers Fisher, who, as a loyalist and a Quaker, was doubly tainted. Fisher sought to divert attention from his own failings to Salomon's faith. Although his letter does not survive, the italicized passages in Salomon's newspaper response indicate Fisher's accusations and how Salomon turned them against him. Salomon was outraged that such an "*odious*" character, "*fetid* and *infamous*," known for "Toryism and disaffection," would launch a "*wanton*" attack on an entire "religious persuasion." Salomon took pride in being both a Jew and a broker, since "we have in general been early on uniform, decisive whigs, and were second to none in our patriotism and attachment to our country." To Fisher's charges that "the Jews were the authors of high and unusual interest," Salomon retorted: "It was neither Jews or Christians that founded the practice, but Quakers – Quakers worse than *heathens, pagans or idolators*" who were "unwilling to venture money in trade during the war." Whether Salomon meant what he said about Quakers, or was simply trying to show Fisher that these charges could more plausibly be directed against his own faith, is an interesting question.[35]

In Georgia a "Citizen" even sought to turn the Jews' admitted patriotism against them. "Had the Jews in this state but conducted themselves with common modesty and decorum," he would have been willing to permit them "to enjoy by *courtesy* some things which it would be impossible to concede of *right* in a Christian country." But Georgia's Jews were "eternally obtruding themselves as volunteers upon every public occasion, one day assuming the lead of an election, the next asking to direct the

[34] For the burials at Christ Church, see Mathew Carey, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia . . .* followed by *List of Names of Persons Buried in the Several Graveyards of the City and Liberties of Philadelphia from August 1st, to November 9th, 1793* (Philadelphia, 1793). See also Abraham S. Rosenbach, "Documents Relative to Major David S. Franks, While Aide-de-Camp to General Arnold," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 6 (1989), 153–87; David Salisbury Franks file, AJA.

[35] *Independent Gazeteer*, March 13 and 20, 1784.

police of the town, and the third daring to pass as jurors upon the life and death of a freeman." Most notably, Mordecai Sheftall had been the leader of the Savannah Parochial Committee, the city's equivalent of the Sons of Liberty, which had spearheaded the Revolution in this heavily divided, reluctant state. Levi Sheftall, Mordecai's brother – perhaps trying to clear his own name, as he was a double agent during the Revolution and was accused of treason by the state – responded as a "Real Citizen." Pointing to his brother's role in the war, he asked "what the Jew particularly alluded to . . . has done that he should not also be entitled to the rights of citizenship." As for the "Citizen," Sheftall pointed out that he had begged pardon of the British and had become the "destroyer of the rights and privileges of a whole set of people" to mask the fact that he himself was a "base deserter of his country's cause."[36]

In Charleston, South Carolina, an antisemite remarked on the arrival in 1780 of refugees from Savannah, recently seized by the British: "upon inspection of their faces and enquiry I found them to be of the tribe of Israel," and at once concluded that they had first taken "every advantage in trade the times admitted of in the State of Georgia," but "as soon as it was attacked, fled here for an asylum, with their ill-got wealth, dastardly turning their backs upon the country when in danger." "A REAL AMERICAN, and True-Hearted Israelite," responded that the family in question consisted entirely of women, namely Abigail Minis (who ran her tavern and commercial ventures until she died aged 93 in 1794) and her four unmarried daughters. They had "happily arrived at an asylum where a tyrannical enemy was not at their or their dear offsprings' heels." Abraham Minis, Abigail's son, served in the Continental Army and loaned $10,000 to the cause.[37]

JEWS IN THE NEW NATION

Antisemitic arguments during and after the Revolution fell, for the most, on deaf ears. Both the United States Constitution and those of nearly all the new states enfranchized Jews and gave them full political rights. What Jews still had to fight was Sabbath legislation – Jewish businessmen who could in conscience only legally open their stores five days a week had to

[36] "A Real Citizen," Box 23, no. 13, Sheftall Papers, University of Georgia, Special Collections, Athens, Georgia; *Georgia Gazette*, January 13, 1785, repr. in Max Kohler, "Phrases of Religious Liberty in America with Particular Reference to the Jews," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 13 (1905), 29–31.

[37] "Abigail Minis, Matriarch," typescript at the Georgia Historical Society, Savannah; also there, see Minis to "Dear Sir" in Charleston, January 4, 1789, no. 1515, and will of Abigail Minis, March 28, 1793, no. 568, Minis Collection; Schappes, *Documentary History*, 53–4.

compete with Christians who could remain open for six. These "blue laws" remained in place until the twentieth century in some states. Maryland, with its heavily Roman Catholic population, only granted Jews political rights in 1826, having transferred to Jews the general prejudices held against Catholics – although Catholics could vote and hold office everywhere. North Carolina, the last holdout, did not enfranchize Jews until after the Civil War.[38]

At the 1787 United States Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, when the city's Jews petitioned the convention that no religious requirements be written into the document, they were pleasantly surprised to discover the matter had already been resolved in their favor without the slightest controversy. The praise heaped upon immigrants, to whom the new republic opened its doors, by Pennsylvania's James Wilson, would explain the convention's attitude toward Jews as well: "Almost all the general officers of the Pennsylvania line (of the late army) were foreigners. And no complaint had ever been made against their fidelity or merit. Three of her deputies to this convention (Mr. [Robert] Morris, Mr. [James] Fitzsimons, and himself) were also not natives." The only two remarks disparaging to Jews in the state convention debates that I have discovered were made by anti-Federalists. One Pennsylvania Federalist went as far as making fun of antisemitism along with anti-Catholicism. Claiming to have surveyed the farmers of Montgomery County after the Bill of Rights had been attached to the Constitution, he mocked people who feared that, without a constitutional amendment, "a Roman Catholic and a Jew stood as good a chance of being President of the United States as a Christian or a Protestant." He then drolly remarked that the same folks wanted amendments to guarantee fishing and hunting, building better roads, and abolishing the theatre. Yet the other of the two anti-Federalist comments is worth pondering. The writer warned that "Given the command of the whole militia to the President – should he hereafter be a Jew, our dear posterity may be ordered to rebuild Jerusalem."[39]

Jewish congregations also wrote new constitutions during the revolutionary era. All four that survived – New York in 1790, Philadelphia in 1782, Charleston in 1793, and Savannah in 1791 – replaced governments in

[38] Jaher, "American Jews in the Revolutionary and Early National Period," 18–19, 22.

[39] Henry S. Morais, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1894), 23; Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, 3 vols. (New Haven, 1911), II, 268–9. For antisemitic remarks and discussion of Jews, I have checked Herbert Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, 7 vols. (Chicago, 1981); and Jonathan Elliott, ed., *The Debates of the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia, 1863–91); *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 14, 1787; *New York Advertiser*, January 14, 1788.

which boards of *yehudim*, or elders, selected their own successors with the election of officers by all adult men. New York's Shearith Israel announced its new mission in the preamble to its constitution of 1790 as:

> In a state happily constituted upon the principles of equal liberty, civil and religious, the several societies, as members of that government partaking of that blessing, being free to adopt the best means for preserving their privileges and for entering into such compact for regulating and well ordering the internal institutions for the administrations of affairs of their several communities.

It followed the rules and regulations with a bill of rights: "Whereas in free states all power originates and is derived from the people who always retain every right necessary for their well-being individually . . . a declaration of bill of rights in like manner the individuals of every society in such a state are entitled to and retain those rights which ought to be preserved inviolate."[40]

Yet with these rights, which besides establishing self-government opened the synagogue to every Jew who would behave himself, came new responsibilities. A republican synagogue, like a republican government, needed to demonstrate to the world a higher moral standard than the lax behavior of colonial and aristocratic times. Those attending were enjoined to pay attention to services, sing in tune and in unison rather than attempt to distinguish themselves by their loud voices, not to come and go disruptively and carry on private conversations as in the past, and not to bring infant children. In Savannah, men were told not to arrive in riding boots. Jews were also required to marry only within the faith, and burial was denied those who had broken this rule, along with those who had failed to attend or contribute to the synagogue.[41] And when three young New York women, in 1786, insisted that they too had to have the vote for the congregation to govern them legitimately, the men were not impressed: they sued them for trespass and then did not allow them to return until they apologized.[42] Services were still conducted in Hebrew, a language few

[40] Daniel J. Elazar, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Rela G. Monson, *A Double Bond: The Constitutional Documents of American Jewry* (Lanham, 1992); Ronald W. Kaplan, "A Study of the Religious Life of the Sephardic Congregation Shearith Israel" (typescript, 1976), 16–17, AJA; Frederic Cople Jaher, *The Jews and the Nation: Revolution, Emancipation, State Formation, and the Liberal Paradigm in France and America* (Princeton, 2002), 157.

[41] Shearith Israel, New York file, Constitution and By-Laws Signed by Isaac Moses and Solomon Simson, 1790, AJA; Jaher, *Jews and the Nation*, 156; Elazar, Sarna, and Monson, *Double Bond*, 103–37.

[42] Isaac Jerusalemi, "Cultural Practices and Ideals of a New York Sephardic Congregation as Reflected in the Minutes of Shearith Israel, 1784–1789" (unpublished paper, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1956), 5–6 – copy at AJA.

understood, one of the reasons Isaac Harby and a number of young Charleston Jews, most of whom had taken little interest in Jewish affairs before, formed the first Reform synagogue in the United States in 1824.[43]

George Washington himself became the leader of the national appreciation for Jewish rights and the Jewish contribution to the Revolution. He showed that not only toleration but an appreciation of religious pluralism and cultural diversity was possible in the late eighteenth century. Upon assuming the presidency, Washington received numerous letters from smaller religious groups – Roman Catholics, Moravians, Quakers, and Jews – applauding his election and praising the fact that their contributions to the Revolution were appreciated and their religious practices tolerated. Furthermore, the serious, individual responses he sent to each of them were published in the *Gazette of the United States.* The President used his office to champion toleration. Washington went even further in responding to the Jews and Freemasons of Newport when Rhode Island belatedly joined the Union in the 1790s. The remark for which he is famous, "behold a government which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance," was in fact the product of the Newport Jews, and he repeated it in his letter. The city's Freemasons, many of whom were Jewish, chose the Jew Moses Seixas and the gentile Henry Sherburne to pen their address to their "brother" George Washington. He replied by launching what can still serve as a pre-emptive strike against those who today proclaim the United States is a Christian republic with a common culture to which immigrants and minorities should conform: "All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights." Yet over two centuries later, it is now spoken of again.[44]

But despite the national harmony which welcomed Washington to the presidency, the attacks on Jews resumed when Alexander Hamilton announced his plans to pay the interest on the national and state debts in specie and start a Bank of the United States modeled on the Bank of England. The *New York Journal* complained: "Tax upon tax . . . a public debt's a public blessing . . . That Spies and Jews may ride in coaches." The populist, anti-federal elements who had linked Jews with the upper-class revolutionaries, by virtue of the prominent merchants among them, used the fact that a handful of Jews would join thousands of gentiles in benefiting from the new policies as a reason to oppose them. Virulent political antisemitism in the 1790s came to reflect the partisanship of the decade.

[43] Gary Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788–1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual* (Tuscaloosa, 1994), esp. 112–25.

[44] Schappes, *Documentary History*, 77–84; Gutstein, *Jews of Newport*, 204–6.

Until 1793, almost all Jews supported the Federalists because only then did support of the French Revolution become the most controversial political issue in the United States. Two years earlier, revolutionary France gave Jews full citizenship, which made American Jews almost universally pro-French. Thus, almost all of them became Jeffersonian Republicans when that party sympathized with the new French republic. Meanwhile, the broad Federalist vision of America – which had embraced toleration and immigration at the time of the Constitutional Convention – narrowed to a belief in a nativist, Protestant America. Antisemitism in the new republic thus became a political football, with each party attempting to build on the assumed antisemitism of the general public to win votes. The real behavior of the republic's tiny Jewish minority did not matter: the anti-Federalists grouped Jews with the wealthy war profiteers; the Federalists, with the immigrants and lower classes who were seeking "some means of knocking down a Government, to Emerge from Dirt to Gold." Sometimes Jews were accused of atheism and materialism, at other times of excessive devotion to the ceremonial rules of an antiquated religion.[45]

Federalist newspapers were the principal vehicle for expressing antisemitism. John Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* denounced the Jews in no uncertain terms, and neither Washington, Vice-President Adams, nor Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton did anything to stop this, despite their own favorable sentiments toward Jews. Much of Fenno's anger fell upon Israel Israel, Vice-President of the Philadelphia Democratic Society founded in 1793, who, despite his name, had been baptized by a Lutheran minister, and later attended Episcopalian and then Unitarian-Universalist services. (As if to emphasize with irony the antisemitic remarks he had endured throughout his life, Israel began his last will and testament: "In the name of the Everlasting God the Father the Saviour of All Men through the Atonement of Jesus Christ the Lord, I ISRAEL ISRAEL," with his name in capital letters.) Fenno ignored the fact that Israel was a revolutionary war hero, and had remained as one of the directors of public relief in Philadelphia during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, in which a tenth of the city lost their lives, and most of those who could afford it (such as Washington and his cabinet) usually left for healthier climes. Fenno became the first known advocate that America "ethnically cleanse" itself of the Jews. He suggested that the Republicans undertake a new exodus: this "would be a second going out of the Children of Israel, or rather of *Israel Israel*: and rather than they should

[45] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 17 and March 17, 1790; *New York Journal*, April 26 and May 1, 1790; cartoon: "A Peep into the Anti-Federal Club" (New York, 1793), copy in Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles*, illustration following 154. For Federalists' attitudes toward immigrants, see Marilyn Baseler, *Asylum for Mankind, 1607–1808* (Ithaca, 1988), chs. 4–8.

not go, I will engage that the quiet citizens will be more willing than the Egyptians were of old to lend them, if not *jewels*, such other articles as may be useful in a new country." The italicized words called attention to Israel as a Jew. It is no wonder that Israel and Fenno actually came to blows on a Philadelphia street, with the "tall rawboned" Israel besting his counterpart.[46]

That Israel Israel could lose his Jewish religion without losing his Jewish ethnicity also resurfaced in the treatment of his son, John Israel, who had only one Jewish grandparent and became the leading Republican printer in western Pennsylvania. When he began publishing the *Herald* (later the *Tree*) *of Liberty* at the age of 22 in 1798, his Federalist counterpart Nicholas Scull circulated a broadside containing the words: "Have you heard of the New Press, of the Jew Press . . . Jacobinism . . . imaginary is . . . or Is real . . . Israel." Citizens who wanted the Jews to convert still attacked them for being Jews when they did, as they retained their prejudices against Native Americans such as the Cherokees who adopted white dress, a Constitution, and private property, and Blacks who achieved middle-class respectability.[47]

For the most part, however, publicly displayed antisemitism died out in the early republic between 1800 and the 1820s, outside predominantly Federalist, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant New England, largely due to the Republicans' overwhelming victory over the Federalists in 1800. Even Federalists who disliked Jews had the intelligence to realize antisemitism was counterproductive: when the western Pennsylvania *Fayette Gazette* attacked John Israel hoping "to prove the Jew a fool," the Pittsburgh Federalists who bought Scull's paper met to "take this public opportunity of declaiming our abhorrence of the vile calumnies, falsehoods, and slanders" associated with antisemitism. That religious toleration could flourish in a country with antisemitic prejudices is attributable to the nation's philosophical belief in freedom of conscience, in addition to its pluralism. The lack of any national ethnic or religious majority, combined with a complicated hierarchy of likes and dislikes among these various groups, proved James Madison correct when he argued in *Federalist* No. 10: "A religious sect may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the

[46] For Israel, see John Alexander, *Render Them Submissive: Responses to Poverty in Philadelphia, 1760–1800* (Amherst, 1980), 37–42; Ronald Schulz, *The Republic of Labor: Philadelphia Artisans and the Politics of Class, 1720–1830* (New York, 1993), 145–51; *Gazette of the United States*, October 9 and 12, 1797; letter of John Fenno, October 26, 1795, Chicago Historical Society, copies at Special Collections, Paterno Library, Pennsylvania State University, for the fight; Israel Israel file, AJA; will of Israel Israel, Ellet Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[47] Carl E. Prince, "John Israel: Printer and Politician on the Pennsylvania Frontier," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 91 (1967), 46–55; *Tree of Liberty*, July 26, August 16, August 23, August 30, October 25, 1800.

Confederacy; but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it must secure the national councils against any danger from that source." Also, the nation had far more serious foes than the Jews: "Papist" French and Spaniards were at war with the colonies for much of the eighteenth century, and Indians always posed a threat. German, Scots-Irish, and then Irish Catholic immigrants were far more numerous and appeared to compromise the republic's character more than the Jews ever could.

The rights of Canadian Jews were also a matter of contention, even though they only numbered about 450 as late as 1850, and were mostly well-to-do merchants, well assimilated into the Montreal merchant community. As early as 1807, Montreal's predominantly French Catholic population elected Ezekiel Hart to the legislature of Lower Canada: he took his oath of office on the Hebrew Bible. The Protestant population, however, protested until Governor James Craig expelled Hart, even after he was re-elected. Not until Britain was ready to pass its own Reform Bill in 1832 did Canadian Jews receive full citizenship, a quarter-century before Jews in Britain itself. The difference was that Canadian Jews were, as mentioned, mostly well-to-do merchants, whereas those in the mother country were generally poor, and Britain had not yet approved the vote for its own propertyless inhabitants.[48]

CONCLUSION

The study of early North American Jewish history began in the late nineteenth century, when elite Jews, much like elite Anglo-Saxon Protestants, celebrated the achievements of their ancestors as both a model for and a rebuke to the eastern European immigrants who were perceived as a threat to the republic. This early work, largely appearing in the annual *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (first published in 1893), along with extensive reprinting of primary sources, still offers much useful information. The more critical study of American Jewish history began with Jacob Rader Marcus (1896–1995) who founded the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati in 1950, along with its journal *American Jewish Archives*, and was virtually a one-man industry, producing numerous general histories of American Judaism, and documentary collections.[49] Only recently have scholars begun to set Jewish history in its early

[48] Michael Brown, "The Beginning of Jewish Emancipation in Canada – The Hart Affair," *Michael: On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora* (Tel Aviv) 10 (1986), 31–8.

[49] Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew, 1492–1776*, 3 vols. (Detroit, 1972); Marcus, *Early American Jewry*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1951, 1953); Marcus, *American Jewry: Documents, Eighteenth Century*; Marcus, *The Handsome Young Priest in the Black Gown*; Frederic Cople Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Antisemitism in America* (Cambridge, MA, 1994); Jaher, *The Jews and the Nation.*

American context rather than treating it as a separate field. This development has taken its lead from excellent contextual work on Jews elsewhere in the Atlantic world – by Jonathan Israel and Miriam Bodian on Jews in the Dutch Empire, and Todd Endelman on English Jews – and the collection edited by Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering on Jews and colonial expansion places the North American experience in its crucial Caribbean and South American contexts.[50]

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[50] Israel, *Entrepots and Empire*; Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, 1997); Bodian, *Dying in the Law of Moses: Crypto-Jewish Martyrdom in the Iberian World* (Bloomington, 2007); Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Jews and the Expansion of the West, 1450–1800* (New York, 2001).

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CHAPTER 38

THE JEWS OF AFRICA AND ASIA (1500–1815)

TUDOR PARFITT

Outside the great centers of Jewish life along the North African littoral and in the Near and Middle East – all of which were in Muslim lands and which, with the exception of the Yemen, will not be the concern of this chapter – the continents of Africa and Asia had few very populous Jewish communities during the early modern period. And yet in the imagination of western Jews and Christians it was precisely in these vast, often unknown expanses of the earth – Africa, India, and China – that powerful Jewish communities were imagined to exist, often in the form of the fabled Lost Tribes of Israel. Following the fervor created by a book by Menasseh ben Israel (1604–57), *The Hope of Israel* (1650), which argued, among other things, that the Lost Tribes had fled from India to China, and the even greater excitement brought about by the messianic career of Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76) in the second half of the seventeenth century, speculation about the location of these tribes reached fever pitch. This in turn led to a great fascination with the remote Jewish communities of Africa and Asia and a particular concern with their origins.

During the period of penetration of western colonialism into Africa, Asia, and the Americas, constant attempts were made to discover the whereabouts of these famed Israelite tribes, and often these non-existent entities would be enlisted – sometimes in a rather desperate fashion – to explain the customs, languages, and religions of these new worlds. These efforts resulted over time in the absorption of Israelite or Jewish identities by a number of people throughout colonized – and even non-colonized – areas. They also led to the development of new Jewish communities which in time would become part of the fabric of world Jewry.

Following the persecution, forced conversion, and expulsion of Jews in the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century, many of them attempted to create a new life in different parts of Africa and Asia. At the same time, in a largely unrelated development, as European colonial activity throughout Africa and Asia increased throughout this period, so Jews tended to follow the colonial flag – and particularly the Union Jack – in search of

commercial possibilities, and in a number of cases, particularly in port towns or on trade routes, laid the foundations of what would later be thriving Jewish communities.

YEMEN

Separated from the great Jewish communities of the Muslim world by geography, blood, and local mores, the Jews of the Yemen had been excluded from many of the currents which had swept the lands of Islam. As in other parts of the Muslim world, the essential factor determining the status of Yemenite Jews was *dhimma* – the "protection" granted non-Muslims, in return for the *jizya* tax. Aspects of the *dhimma* arrangement were that Jews, as *dhimmis*, were not permitted to carry arms, or ride horses (they were allowed to ride mules on condition that they rode side-saddle like women), and they were required always to behave humbly around Muslims – for instance, always passing a Muslim on the left side. In the early modern period in the Yemen, sumptuary laws and social restrictions were applied more strictly than elsewhere in the Muslim world. Outside the main urban centers, in tribal areas where *dhimma* could not be enforced, *jar* prevailed. This was tribal law – a pre-Islamic socio-legal system based loosely on concepts of honor in dealing with weak and vulnerable members of desert society.

To an extent unknown elsewhere, Yemenite Jews were viewed by other Yemenis as an indigenous community rather than an as a historically immigrant group. As we now know through genetic studies, there are reasons to place the origins of the community, at least in part, in the Judaizing Himyaritic state, elements of which converted to a form of Judaism which had flourished at the southern end of the Arabian peninsula in pre-Islamic times and which is particularly associated with the reign of Yūsuf Dhū Nuwās, who ruled from AD 517 to 525–7.[1] There has been a historically visible Jewish community in the Yemen practicing normative rabbinic Judaism since the early medieval period.

The Jewish community emerged from a period of relative isolation when the Ottomans succeeded in extending their rule from the coastal plain to the Yemeni highlands, which, against fierce opposition, they did in 1547. For the Jews, the importance of the Ottoman occupation was twofold: under the Ottomans, the *shari'a*-based restrictions tended to be less onerous, and being part of a great empire improved the Jews' links with other Ottoman Jewish communities. Travel was all of a sudden easy, whereas

[1] Doron M. Behar, Bayazit Yunusbayev, Mait Metspalu, *et al.*, "The Genome Wide Structure of the Jewish People," *Nature* (June 9, 2010), 238–42.

once it had been hazardous. Thus, in 1567, the writer and exegete Zechariah al-Dahiri (1519–89) was able to visit Safed in Ottoman-controlled Palestine. In Safed, he studied at Rabbi Joseph Karo's famous *yeshiva* and learned about the new trends in Jewish mysticism, which he helped to diffuse in the Yemen. His kabbalistic sojourn in Safed was but one aspect of his great voyage, which took him to various parts of the Ottoman Empire but also to Cochin in southern India, where he spent three months, and Ethiopia.[2]

During the Ottoman occupation and local resistance to it, the Jews were often victims of the tension that existed between the Turks and the Zaydi population, and were accused, as they would be in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of siding with the enemy. There was nothing unique about this: throughout the Muslim world, the Jews were most at danger when a particular state or area was threatened from outside. The Turks evacuated the highlands in 1630, partly because of fierce local resistance coordinated by the Imam al-Muayyad Muhammad, but partly, too, because the importance of the Yemen and the Red Sea route to the Indian Ocean had decreased with the increased use of the Cape route. Indeed, the focus of attention had so much moved that by the end of the eighteenth century the Ottoman Grand Vizier, Yusuf Ziya, in an interview with the British naval commander Sir Sidney Smith, refused to believe that there was any physical connection at all between the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.[3] The 1630 departure of the Turks triggered a sharp deterioration in the position of the Jews of the Yemen brought about by religious intolerance on the part of the dominant Zaydi authorities, although there was a good deal of opposition to and discussion of the various measures among jurists.[4] The period of persecution was provoked in part by a messianic movement in the Yemen inspired by Sabbatai Zevi. The rise of messianic agitation in the mid seventeenth century brought about an end to the contract of *dhimma* between the non-Muslim and the Islamic state. One of the first signs of this was the 1666 Decree of the Headgear (Arabic *al-'amā'im*) which forbade the Jews from wearing turbans – a sign of status and prestige. Subsequently, the Jews were required to dress in drab clothes and never publicly demonstrate any sign of ostentation. This was followed by the destruction of the synagogues in Sana'a, one of which was thought to date from pre-Islamic times. On the site of the main synagogue, a mosque was erected, known as the Mosque of the Expulsion (*masjid al-Jala'*).

[2] Zechariah al-Dahiri, *Sefer ha-Musar*, ed. Y. Ratzaby (Jerusalem, 1965).
[3] Y. Nini, *Jews of the Yemen 1800–1914* (London, 1991); T. Parfitt, *The Road to Redemption: The Jews of the Yemen 1900–1950* (Leiden, 1996).
[4] Zaydism is a branch of Shi'a Islam almost unique to the Yemen.

In 1679, the expulsion of the Jews from the highland cities was ordered by the Imam Ahmad al-Mahdi (1676–81) who invoked the questionable Islamic ruling that non-Muslims should not be permitted to reside in Arabia (even though many Islamic jurists would have argued that this ruling only applied to the Hijaz). The Jews of Sana'a and other highland Yemeni cities were expelled to the small town of Mawza in the Tihama on the Red Sea coast, not far from Mocha, where many died. The Imam wrote a letter to Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor, with whom he corresponded on other matters, suggesting that he might be willing to accommodate in India his unwanted Jews, who in any case were hoping to find a way to India, about which they had no doubt heard good things.[5]

Although the Yemenite Jews had always had some links with Jews of the Muslim world, particularly those in Egypt and Mesopotamia, the community had also enjoyed a close relationship with the cultural and trading world of the Indian Ocean, and in particular with western India. Over the previous forty years, since the departure of the Turks, Mocha's trade had turned eastward toward the Indian Ocean, and links with India and with the Indian Jewish merchants had increased dramatically. If there was an answer to the Imam's letter to Aurangzeb, there is no record of it, but given Aurangzeb's well-known antipathy to Jews and Judaism there is little reason to imagine that he would have looked with favor on the importation of the Yemen's Jews to his territories. In any event, a year or so later, the Imam relented and recalled the much-depleted community to the capital and other towns. However, the relative security of the community was not restored officially, and decrees requiring the Jews to clean the latrines of the city, and requiring Jewish orphans to be relinquished by the community to be raised as Muslims by the state, persisted. The abrogation of the decree of exile was no doubt prompted by practical considerations, for at the time and throughout the early modern period the Jews played a growing and vital part in the economy of the Yemen. They excelled precisely in occupations which Muslims considered ignoble: metalwork, the making of guns and swords, silver work, the manufacture and dyeing of clothes, the construction of tools of all sorts, well-digging, carpentry, and building, among many other areas of activity. They had become indispensable.[6]

[5] Personal communication from Dr. Bernard Haykel, Princeton University.

[6] J. Sadan, "The 'Latrines Decree' in the Yemen versus the Dhimma Principles," in Jan. G. Platvoet and Karel van der Toorn, *Pluralism and Identity: Studies in Ritual Behaviour* (Leiden, 1995), 167–85; Walter J. Fischel, "Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors in Medieval India," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 18 (1948–9), 137–77; Nini, *Jews of the Yemen*.

After the return from Mawza, the Sana'a Jewish community was forbidden to re-establish itself inside the city walls, but was settled in an area a little to the west of the city, which became known as the Qa al-Yahud ("Jews' Plain") and expanded throughout the eighteenth century. By the eighteenth century, the Jewish quarter of the Qa had its own markets, fourteen synagogues, and houses "as handsome as the best in Sana'a." This relatively prosperous community was able to absorb the Jews who had been expelled from Jedda in 1786. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the Jewish community centered on Mocha, on the Tihama coast, had expanded and was intimately involved with the Red Sea trade. Even down in cosmopolitan Mocha, Jews were forbidden to wear turbans, but there were some thousand families, including "many saints and Cabbalists" – according to one source, a Jew in Cochin, India – and seventeen synagogues.[7]

The eighteenth-century Imams were more tolerant of the community than their seventeenth-century predecessors. In defiance of *shari'a*, new synagogues were built to replace those destroyed at the time of the expulsion. Notwithstanding the general respect shown to the leaders and rabbis of the Jewish communities, by the end of the eighteenth century the treatment of ordinary Jews as a whole, mainly in the form of taxation and sumptuary laws, was harsher than in any other Muslim country on earth.[8]

ETHIOPIA

Recent scholarship has demonstrated with great clarity that the origins of the Jewish community of Ethiopia (Beta Israel or Falasha) should be seen in the context of religious and political processes which occurred in Ethiopia between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. During this period – one of great political and social turmoil – loosely affiliated groups of people referred to in the Ethiopian sources by the pejorative term *ayhud* ("Jews") developed into an ethnic group which eventually became known by the equally pejorative term "Falasha" ("strangers or exiles"). The term *ayhud* was always used to refer either to political opponents of, or rebels against, the Ethiopian Solomonic dynasty or to Christian heretics. The phenomenon of Jews and Judaism acting as a conduit for quite alien categories in many periods of history and throughout the world has been recently described by David Nirenberg.[9]

[7] S. S. Koder, "A Hebrew Letter of 1768 by Y. Rahabi," *Journal of the Rama Varma Archeological Society* 15 (1949), 1–6.

[8] B. Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad Al-Shawkani* (Cambridge, 2003); Parfitt, *The Road to Redemption*, 22.

[9] David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York, 2013).

The religion and ethnicity which emerged at this time from these amorphous groups of rebellious and heretical *ayhud* were based on some form of Ethiopian Christianity. At its most orthodox, Ethiopian Christianity is a remarkably Judaic form of the Christian faith. It can be imagined that the forms celebrated by the rebellious and heretical *ayhud* were even more so. The term "Falasha" as a description of this emerging group was only widespread from around 1500.[10] It is worth mentioning that, in the area west of Lake Tana in Ethiopia in the early modern period, there was another Judaic-looking group known as the Qemant, somewhat similar to the Beta Israel, who may also have emerged from groups analogous to the *ayhud* – which is to say, from some Judaized version of local Christianity – and whose religious practices were a fusion of Old Testament Judaism and paganism.[11]

Beta Israel narratives trace practically all aspects of their religious praxis to the Christian monks Abba Sabra and Sagga Amlak, whose influence governed liturgy, purity rules, religious holidays, monasticism, and literature in general. Both Christians and Falashas held to Judaic practices such as food taboos and circumcision, and both were open to specifically Christian practices such as monasticism. There is no single aspect of the religion of the Beta Israel which needs any extraneous, non-Ethiopian explanation. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, their religion developed into a form of Judaism. It did not develop as a result of any link with the external Jewish world but as a complex reaction to local events.[12]

World Jewry had sparse knowledge of the Beta Israel before the eighteenth century. Various reports had filtered through to Europe concerning the existence of "Jews" in Ethiopia prior to this date – some of which may have referred to the Beta Israel, while some did not – and to an extent these reports contrived to create a sense that the Beta Israel were indeed Jews in the conventional sense of the term. It is often supposed (wrongly) that the earliest reference in Jewish sources to the Beta Israel community was contained in the narrative of Eldad ha-Dani, a mysterious ninth-century character who claimed to have come from an autonomous Jewish state somewhere in Africa inhabited by the tribes of Asher, Gad, Naphtali, and Dan. This narrative, which became a key geographical text for the Jews (and Christians) of medieval Europe, was declared reliable by some of the greatest early medieval Jewish scholars.[13]

[10] S. Kaplan, *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1994).

[11] F. Gamst, *The Qemant: A Pagan–Hebraic Peasantry of Ethiopia* (New York, 1969).

[12] A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450–1950* (Oxford, 1995), 15.

[13] J. Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (New York, 2004), 124; Kaplan, *The Beta Israel*; D. Kessler, *The Falashas: A Short History of the Ethiopian Jews* (London, 1996), 84; A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *History of Abyssinia* (London, 2003), 88.

The issue of the Beta Israel first came to the notice of Jews elsewhere in the sixteenth century when a Beta Israel woman, whose husband had (perhaps) been killed when their town was attacked, was taken into slavery and sold to a Jew in the Cairo slave market. The Jew had sexual relations with his slave and a son was born. In time the said son wanted to marry a Jewish girl from Cairo. Was this permissible under Jewish law? The issue became one of *mamzerut* ("bastardry"). If the woman's Beta Israel husband had not indeed been killed and she was therefore still married to him, her son would be a *mamzer* and would not be able to marry a "legitimate" Jewess. The question of the Jewishness of the female slave was never at issue because the presumption was immediately made that the Beta Israel community constituted the Jewish state, composed of Lost Tribes, described in such loving and fabulous detail by Eldad. The Spanish-born chief rabbi of Egypt, David ben Zimra (1479–1573), known as the Radbaz, was asked to adjudicate on the matter. In a responsum, he noted that the woman had come from the land of Cush and was of the tribe of Dan. "Those Jews," he noted:

> who come from the land of Cush are without doubt from the tribe of Dan, and since they did not have in their midst sages who were masters of the tradition, they clung to the simple meaning of the Scriptures . . . so their status is comparable to a Jewish infant taken captive by non-Jews . . . And even if you say that the matter is in doubt, it is a commandment to redeem them.

In other words, the Beta Israel were connected with an ancient Israelite population, in the form of one or more of the Lost Tribes, who had found their way to Ethiopia and should therefore be considered as Jews.[14]

In the following century, the Portuguese Jesuit missionary Balthazar Tellez (1595–1675), in *The Travels of the Jesuits in Ethiopia*, wrote:

> betwixt the Emperor's Dominions and the Cafres dwelling near the River Nile and now free from any Subjection to the Empire, there are still many of these Jews, whom they there call Falaxas, which signifies Strangers and it may be suppos'd they also came into Ethiopia out of the Captivity of Salmanasar or afterwards, when they were expell'd, at the Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and Vespasian.

Tellez constructed the Beta Israel in a "normative" form by suggesting falsely that the Beta Israel not only had Hebrew texts but also spoke Hebrew, "but with much corruption in the Words, as there is in their Lives and Manners." Historically, the Beta Israel community had no

[14] Michael Corinaldi, *Jewish Identity: The Case of Ethiopian Jewry* (Jerusalem, 1988); J. D. Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems*, vol. I, Library of Jewish Law and Ethics (Jerusalem, 2011); D. Wasserstein, "Eldad Ha-Dani," in C. F. Beckingham and B. Hamilton, eds., *Prester John, the Mongols and the Ten Lost Tribes* (Aldershot, 1996), 214ff.

knowledge at all of Hebrew and there is no mention in any of the literature that they owned or held any Hebrew texts, but of course Jews elsewhere had Hebrew texts and therefore, in order to confirm their Jewishness, or to construct their Jewishness, Tellez made the Beta Israel Hebrew-speaking.[15] In seventeenth-century Europe, something was known of the Beta Israel in certain very restricted circles. François Bernier (1620–88), the French physician and traveler, for instance, mentioned that he had learned about Jews in Ethiopia, "where they are very numerous, these people are remarkable for courage and military prowess; and if I am to believe two ambassadors from the Ethiopian King . . . there was a Jew, fifteen or sixteen years ago, grown so formidable, that he endeavoured to erect an independent kingdom in a certain small and mountainous district difficult of access." This account, which Bernier picked up when he was in Mocha on the Red Sea coast of the Yemen, from Ethiopian ambassadors to the Emperor of Mughal India, was substantially correct.[16] Details about the community were brought to a wider audience some hundred years later through James Bruce's *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 and 1773* (London, 1790), and by the end of the eighteenth century it was widely known that there was something akin to a Jewish community in Ethiopia.

The origins of the community were to exert a fascination over Jews and non-Jews for years to come, as did the origins of other "exotic" Jewish communities from the Bene Israel of India to the Jews of China. Where on earth did they come from? Were they a Lost Tribe of Israel? When Bruce came across the community, they explained "that they came with Menelik from Jerusalem." Thus, Bruce could observe, rightly, that they shared the traditions of other Ethiopians who maintained that their first Emperor, Menelik, was the son of the Queen of Sheba, considered an Ethiopian queen, and King Solomon. By the time the Swiss Anglican missionary Samuel Gobat visited the Beta Israel in 1830, this had changed and there was a mixed tradition which veered between the standard Ethiopian one and the idea that they were Jewish exiles from the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Their Jewishness became institutionalized when, perhaps at the suggestion of Joseph Wolff (1795–1862), Samuel Gobat – the Jewish convert to Christianity, missionary, traveler, and fervent seeker of the Lost Tribes – urged the London Society for the Promoting of Christianity amongst the Jews to take over the mission to the Beta Israel.[17]

[15] B. Tellez, *The Travels of the Jesuits in Ethiopia* (London, 1710), 39.
[16] François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656–1668* (London, 1891), 431.
[17] Tellez, *Travels of the Jesuits*, 66, 39.

WEST AFRICA

The Beta Israel were not the only African group with some Judaic practices to be constructed as Jews in the early modern period. In Renaissance Europe, new information about Jewish communities or imagined Jewish communities in sub-Saharan Africa came chiefly from Arab historians and geographers. The most influential of these was Leo Africanus (*c.* 1492 – *c.* 1550) who was born of Arab Muslim parents in Granada and was originally called Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Zayyati. After the Spanish conquest of Granada in 1492, his wealthy family moved to Morocco, and the young Hassan traveled widely in Africa, visiting Timbuktu and the sub-Saharan empires of Mali and Bornu. Captured by Italian pirates off the North African coast on a return trip from Mecca, in 1518 Hassan was compelled to convert to Christianity. His most important work was the remarkable *Description of Africa* which was written around 1528–9 and was for many years a key source on sub-Saharan Africa. Translated in 1556 into both Latin and French, it went through a number of editions in several European languages. An English translation by John Pory appeared in 1600, which was read by Ben Jonson and probably by Shakespeare and John Webster. In *Description*, there are frequent mentions of Jews in Africa: he notes that once Jewish law was widely observed, that there were warrior tribes in the Atlas claiming descent from King David, that the Canaanites traveled to Africa, followed later by the Sabeans, and that the ruler of Timbuktu could not stand the sight of Jews. As the major modern source on Africa, *Description* carried great authority. In a postscript to the English edition entitled "A Summaried Discourse of the Manifold Religions Professed in Africa," John Pory noted:

> At this day also the Abassins affirm that upon the Nilus towards the west there inhabiteth a most populous nation of the Jewish stock under a mightie king. And some of our modern cosmographers set down a province in those quarters which they call the land of the Hebrews, placed as it were under the equinoctial, in certain unknown mountains, between the confines of Abassin and Congo.

John Ogilby (1600–76), a translator and publisher, gave further information about Jews in the continent in his *Africa* (London, 1670). He noted of the coast of Guinea, "Many Jews also are scattered over this region; some Natives, boasting themselves of Abraham's seed, inhabiting both sides of the River Niger: Others are Asian strangers, who fled hither either from the desolation of Jerusalem by Vespasian or from Judea wasted and depopulated by the Romans, Persians, Saracens and Christians." And Ogilby also included the suggestion by Leo Africanus that Jews were to be found in the inland areas.[18]

[18] T. Parfitt, *Black Jews in Africa and the Americas* (New York, 2012), 23–4.

By the eighteenth century, there were many descriptions in travel and missionary accounts of the Lost Tribes of Israel – Jews or descendants of Jews living along the western coast of Africa. There were also accounts of residual traces of Judaism practiced in these areas. Perhaps the most famous of these is the one contained in Olaudah Equiano's celebrated biography – *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789). This described analogies between Jewish customs, law, and belief and those of the Igbo tribe.[19] Equiano's text is famously problematic. There is ample reason to be cautious about those parts of the book which purport to be a first-hand account of his early life in an Igbo village, given the grave doubts recent scholarship has cast upon both the date and place of his birth.[20] Nonetheless, there is general agreement that some of what he wrote about the ethnography of the Igbo appears authentic. Clearly the main point here is the comparison between Igbo manners and customs, and those of the Jews. The comparison itself obviously does not come from his childhood memory, nor does he say it does. The passage conveys the kind of general impressions which Equiano might easily have gleaned throughout his life from Igbos he met in America, or more probably from the general presumptions, embedded in western attitudes and texts, that there were Jews and Jewish or Israelite customs in West Africa. Given the widespread nature of the discourses maintaining that there were Israelite Lost Tribes in every spot on the globe from the Americas, to India and China, or to the islands of the Pacific, Equiano, who lived in London, would have been hard pressed not to be aware of them. It is possible that he made this comparison with Jews in order to give added credibility to his work by invoking this, the conventional wisdom of his time – namely, that there were Jews in West Africa – and to give the impression that black Africans were civilized and humane and had a culture which, like British culture and European culture in general, had been influenced by Judaic ideals.[21]

A Scottish explorer, Mungo Park (1771–1806), described having encountered what he called Arabic-speaking Jews in West Africa, on the left bank of the River Niger, and remarked that there were said to be many Jews in nearby Timbuktu. The community in Timbuktu is well attested and its probable descendants, now Muslims, still proudly invoke the Jewish origins

[19] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London, 1789), 19–21; D. Lis, *Jewish Identity among the Igbo of Nigeria: Israel's "Lost Tribe" and the Question of Belonging in the Jewish State* (New Jersey, 2014).

[20] Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Athens, GA, 2005).

[21] See T. Parfitt, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth* (London, 2002).

of their group. In addition, in São Tomé, an island about 150 miles off the northwestern coast of Gabon, there was a community of people of part-Jewish descent who were originally expelled from Portugal in considerable numbers following the forced expulsion of Jews from Portugal in 1496.[22] In 1601, the Portuguese crown gave orders permitting Jewish merchants, based mainly on the island of Cape Verde, to settle and trade along the Senegambian and Upper Guinea coasts. Soon, Jews were working as trade factors along the coast, and even in the interior among the Wolof and other African communities. They traded for slaves, wax, gum, ivory, and gold. In Senegambia, a number of *conversos* even took advantage of the remoteness of their settlements and the distance from Portugal to return publicly to their ancestral faith. There were similar, if not identical, developments along the west coast of India, which also provided a haven for persecuted Jewish refugees from the Iberian Peninsula. From the seventeenth century, these Jews, some of mixed Portuguese-African descent, some with African wives and servants, were often engaged in the illegal importing of swords. The descendants of these Jews and other Portuguese émigrés, of Cape Verde islanders, and of West Africans "developed a culture that was itself a synthesis of African and European elements." By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the Jewish element of this mixed population seems to have been absorbed by the host society.[23]

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Other imagined traces of Jews and Judaism in sub-Saharan Africa are for the most part unlikely to be associated with Sephardic settlements or with any extraneous factor other than the widespread notion that Jews, as remnants of the Lost Tribes, lived in Africa. In the Cape, as elsewhere, the Bible became a tool for the better comprehension of African peoples and their languages and religions. Time and again the peculiarities of local peoples, in an exercise in comparative religion on the colonial frontier, were put in some kind of a Judaic context by Europeans. Thus, Georg

[22] M. Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa: Performed in the Years 1795 1796, and 1797 with an Account of a Subsequent Mission to that Country in 1805* (London, 1817), 309.

[23] P. Mark and J. da Silva Horta, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (New York, 2011); P. Mark and J. da Silva Horta, "Two Early Seventeenth-Century Sephardic Communities on Senegal's Petite Côte," *History in Africa* 31 (2004); N. de Moraes, *À la découverte de la Petite Côte au XVIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Dakar, 1993) I, 116, cited in P. Mark, "The Evolution of 'Portuguese' Identity: Luso-Africans on the Upper Guinea Coast from the Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, 40, 2 (1999), 177; R. Hull, *Jews and Judaism in African History* (Princeton, 2009), 109.

Meister who landed at the Cape in 1677, noted that "bestial men or animal-like" "Hottentots" – the name given the Khoisan by the Dutch – used "a very sharp flint to shave the hair of their beards, as the Jews are said to do in their circumcisings, with which they can smooth their chins as neatly as if they had the best razors." In 1695, Johannes Gulielmus Grevenbroek (b. *c.* 1644), building on the comparison of Meister, made further increasingly wild connections between the circumcision rituals of Jews and of the Khoisan. Grevenbroek, like others elsewhere in Africa, also imagined linguistic connections between Hebrew and the language of the Khoisan. "I am of the opinion," he wrote, "that the language of the natives has something in common with Hebrew, for it seems to consist of guttural labials, dentals, linguals and other sounds that fall with difficulty from the lips and are hard for us to pronounce." Indeed, throughout the period of the colonization of Africa, countless African languages would be understood as deriving from Hebrew or some other Semitic language.[24] In 1705, Peter Kolb (1675–1725), a well-educated astronomer from southern Germany, was sent to the Cape to make astronomical and meteorological observations. Kolb published a very successful book, *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope*, which also claimed that many, if not most, of the general customs and traditions of the Khoisan were connected with those of the Jews. The Khoisan, he argued, could be counted among the children of Abraham, as they were indeed of Jewish blood. His conclusions were widely accepted by European intellectuals.[25]

Genetic evidence established toward the end of the twentieth century suggested that the Judaizing tribe of Lemba of southern Africa (known as wa-Remba in Shona-speaking areas) are of possible Jewish origin.[26] Their pre-colonial religion, insofar as it is possible to reconstruct it, had something in common with biblical Judaism and was probably not entirely dissimilar from the religion of the Beta Israel of Ethiopia. The first clear reference to the Lemba is provided in a Dutch report written by an official of the short-lived Dutch East India Company trading center at Delagoa

[24] T. Parfitt, "Hebrew in Colonial Discourse," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 2, 2 (2003), 159–73.

[25] See, e.g., G. Schrire, "Did the Hottentots Descend from the Jews?" 64, 2, *Jewish Affairs* (2009), 13; G. Hemmy, *De promontorio bonae spei: oratorio latina de promontorio bonae spei, in schola hamburgensi d. 10 aprilis 1767 publice recitata* (Hamburg, 1767); *De promontorio bonae spei / The Cape of Good Hope: a Latin oration delivered in the Hamburg Academy, 10 April 1767*, ed. and trans. K. D. White, with additional notes by G. S. Nienaber and D. H. Varley (Cape Town, 1959), 29–20.

[26] T. Parfitt, M. G. Thomas, D. A. Weiss, *et al.*, 'Y Chromosomes Travelling South: The Cohen Modal Hapolotype and the Origins of the Lemba – the 'Black Jews of Southern Africa,'" *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 66, 2 (2000), 674–86.

Bay, in what is today Mozambique. The report noted that, in the vicinity of the northeastern corner of what is today South Africa, a number of different tribes were under one ruler: "The Walemba, Inthowelle, Paraotte . . . were under one chief who lived in the province of Inthowelle and to all the above-mentioned countries they gave the name Beesa." A further report "made by the Negro called Hoeman or Mahoemane, who went there with a group of Inthowellers" in February 1727 and returned in 1728 gave further information about the Lemba:

> the Walembers who are always coming here with those of Inthowelle . . . are a nation which lives at the top of the country of Inthowelle, and they are a nation which some years ago got the worst of a struggle with those from Gole and then part of them went under the protection of the Inthowellers while the other part submitted to the victor. The aforementioned Walembers were said to be rich in gold, too, and this nation was also doing trade with the Portuguese in the direction of the aforementioned Sena.[27]

Quite what happened to the Lemba after this is unclear: but they appear to have joined other tribes in small groups, often working in specific roles, including those of goldsmiths, medicine men of war, ritual experts, and so on.

INDIA

There have been Jews in India for well over a thousand years, and perhaps considerably longer. There were several Jewish communities in India in the early modern period: Persian-speaking Jews living in the interior and particularly throughout the Mughal Empire; refugees from the Inquisition who settled in Portuguese territories and their hinterlands; Ashkenazic and Sephardic merchant communities that followed the Dutch and the British to Surat, Madras, and other towns; the so-called Baghdadi community which was chiefly associated with the coastal trading towns of Surat, Calcutta, and Bombay; the Bene Israel of the Konkan coast in western India and Bombay; and the ancient communities in and around Cochin, the port town in Kerala.[28]

One of the motors for new Jewish settlements throughout the world in the sixteenth century was the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal. There were settlements of these refugees from persecution in western India

[27] G. Liesenbang, "New Light on Venda Traditions: Mahumane's Account of 1730," *History in Africa* 4 (1977), 163–81; A. Smith, "Delagoa Bay and the trade of South-Eastern Africa," in R. Gray and D. Birmingham (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade* (London, 1970), 275–6.

[28] N. Katz, *Indian Jews: An Annotated Bibliography 1665–2005* (Kolkata, 2013).

much as there were along the western coast of Africa during the same period. The *Casa da India* kept an official register of those whom the King had licensed to travel to India. These licenses were only granted to three categories of people: members of the clergy, married men, and soldiers. Foreigners and those suspected of unorthodox Christian belief were barred. Inevitably, efforts to eliminate unorthodox Christianity were mainly aimed at New Christians. The Portuguese authorities were well aware of the presence of existing Jewish communities in India as these were mentioned in the geographical works of the time, and the presence of these Jews gave rise to the fear that New Christians might revert to Judaism under their baleful influence. In 1501, King Manuel decreed, perhaps for this reason, that New Christians could not hold posts as, for example, judges, legal counsels, or scribes in India, and eventually they were forbidden from going East at all, while New Christians already there were ordered to return. However, despite these legal impediments, New Christians settled in considerable numbers in India, and their merchants became major players in the trade of the East. Such were their numbers that in 1561 the Holy Office was established in Goa, and soon the wealthiest New Christian merchants were being punished and their goods and property confiscated as Judaizers. By 1600, at least eighty-four New Christians had been burned to death along the Malabar coast. Many more were interrogated or had their goods taken: at least forty were required to renounce Judaism in public ceremonies. By the seventeenth century, Jews such as the Tinoco, Fernandes, Silver, Gomes Denis e Solis, Brandão, and Vaaz de Souza families controlled two-thirds of the Indian trade, and the community numbered several hundred, if not more. The viciousness of Portuguese persecution sometimes drove New Christians to leave Portuguese possessions and settle in other parts of India. Not much is known of what befell them. We do know that one Manuel of Elvas arrived in Goa in 1554 and soon after went overland to Vijayanagara. At the time this was the second-most-populous city on earth and, prior to its destruction by Muslim armies in 1565, a good place to hide. In Vijayanagara, he met other Jews: Antonio Dias d'Ancona from Cochin, Alvaro Gomes from Goa, and Antonio and Jermino d'Aguiar, as well as Manuel Fernandes.[29] It is entirely likely that these refugees from Christian persecution, who had made such strenuous efforts to remove themselves from the Inquisition in Europe, secretly practiced Judaism and in their hearts considered themselves to be Jews. It is further the case that they formed relationships with other Jewish communities scattered down India's west coast.

[29] James C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580–1640* (Baltimore, 2007).

Another eastward migration that was to generate Jewish communities and influence in Asia was that of Persian-speaking Jews from Afghanistan and Iran. Some of these came with the Mughal invasions of Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur (1483–1530). Unfortunately, very little indeed is known about these communities, and further research is required to cast light on their activities. What is known is that Jews were specifically mentioned by the Persian court historian Abu'l Fazl (1551–1602) insofar as they played a role in the Ibādat Khāna ("House of Worship"), which was the famous construction built in 1575 by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556–1605) at Fatehpur Sikri, some 110 miles south of Delhi. The Ibādat Khāna was intended to bring together under one roof theologians and philosophers of different religious backgrounds to debate religious matters in a harmonious and respectful manner. According to Abu'l Fazl, it "shone resplendent with the light of holy minds – Sufis, doctors, preachers – Jains, Christians and Jews." Further evidence that Jews participated in this "parliament of religion" is provided by the Jesuit Fr. Antony Monserrate, while the well-known Persian work on comparative religion – the *Dabistan* – is full of references to Jews taking part in religious disputations at the court. There were sufficient Jews in the Empire, apparently, for synagogues to have been built in Mughal territories, evidence for which is found in a letter from Sir Thomas Roe in 1616. We have some information on the life and activities of Sa'id Sarmad (1590–1660), one of the more fascinating individuals to make a mark on the Indian subcontinent. A Persian Jew born in Armenia, Sarmad became one of the mystical luminaries at the Mughal court and is best known for traveling around India naked and for being beheaded by the Emperor Aurangzeb. Although he converted to Islam (his Sufi tomb [*dargah*] still adorns the entrance to Delhi's Jama' Masjid), his religious identity remains ambiguous. There is reason to believe that his spiritual journeys did not prevent him from viewing himself, or being viewed by others, as a Jew.[30]

BAGHDADIS

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Surat, a port town with an excellent harbor, some 165 miles north of Bombay, became the predominant center of

[30] Walter J. Fischel, "Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors in Medieval India," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 18 (1948–9), 137–77; N. Katz, "The Identity of a Mystic: The Case of Sa'id Sarmad, a Jewish-Yogi-Sufi Courtier of the Mughals," *Numen* 47 (2000), 142–60; B. A. Hashimi, "Sarmad, His Life and Quatrains," *Islamic Culture* (1933), 663–72, 666.

commerce between India and Europe and retained this status until the rise of Bombay in the eighteenth century. Jewish merchants from Holland such as Pedro Pereira and Anthony and John de Porto, started to arrive from 1686. Prior to this, there were probably New Christians and, somewhat later, members of the Bene Israel community. By about 1740, they were joined by Ashkenazic merchants from Hamburg, Amsterdam, and London, who included Abraham Elias and Samuel Levy, and at about the same time they were joined by Jews from Basra, Baghdad, and Aleppo.[31] One of the chief Arabian merchants was Isaac David. In 1789, Shalom ha-Cohen left his home town of Aleppo and traveled first to Baghdad and then to Basra, from where he embarked on an English ship to Bombay. In 1790, he arrived in Surat for a brief exploratory visit, returned to Basra and only in 1792 returned with his *shohet*, cook, and servant, and bought a house from an Armenian merchant. The trade of Shalom and others like him was principally with Basra, Moscat, Mocha in the Yemen, and Baghdad, and was on a considerable scale. We know that there was already a small group of Arabic- and Farsi-speaking Jews in the city from different parts of Muslim west Asia. Whether they were from Baghdad, Aleppo, Yemen, or Persia, they were still referred to as Baghdadis. Joseph Semah was partially responsible for the eventual construction of a synagogue and cemetery in what is now the Katargam area of Surat, and there may have been other synagogues in the city as well.

In 1662, Bombay had been acquired by the English as part of the dowry for Catherine of Braganza's wedding to Charles II. Five years later, the East India Company moved its presidency from Surat to Bombay, and the following year established a factory there. As Surat began its decline, Jewish merchants – one of whom was Semah – gradually moved to Bombay. Joseph Semah's arrival in the city marks the beginning of the Bombay Baghdadi community which, over the next two centuries, was to rise to great prominence. Semah was soon followed by others, including the merchant Solomon Jacob, who by the end of the eighteenth century was playing a leading role in the commercial life of the city.

Jews from Surat also moved to Calcutta, which became a great and wealthy center of Baghdadi Jewish life. There had been some Jewish individuals in the city prior to this influx, one of whom, Abraham Jacob or Jacobs, an official of the East India Company, was praised for providing food for the survivors of the Black Hole of Calcutta tragedy of 1756. Lyon Prager was the representative of the London firm Israel Levin Salomons and functioned both as a diamond merchant and as purchaser and inspector of drugs on behalf of the Board of Trade of Fort William. Other western Jews worked as

[31] Walter J. Fischel, "The Immigration of 'Arabian' Jews to India in the Eighteenth Century," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 33 (1965), 1–20.

merchants and officials in the city. However, under the leadership of Shalom Obadiah ha-Cohen (1762–1836) of Aleppo, who arrived in 1798, a real community started to develop, which was strengthened by the arrival of further Jewish merchants from Bombay, Surat, and Cochin, as well as newcomers from the Yemen and other parts of the Middle East. Ha-Cohen's commercial interests "took him from the Punjab to Dacca across the great Gangetic plain of northern India, and small Jewish trading outposts – often including a prayer hall and a cemetery – sprang up in his footsteps from Lucknow to Darjeeling." Initially, the great commercial fortunes of the Baghdadis were created through the highly lucrative opium trade to China, and subsequently diversified into most areas of commerce and industry.[32]

THE NATIVE JEW CASTE: BENE ISRAEL

The first possible reference to the indigenous Bene Israel community of Maharashtra in western India is in a 1738 letter from a Danish missionary, J. A. Sartorius – who had been sent to Madras in 1730 by the Christian Knowledge Society – to H. H. Francke in Halle. The Danes, it should be noted, had a number of commercial outposts in India in the eighteenth century, governed from Tranquebar, and there was a steady flow of Danish missionaries to there and elsewhere. Sartorius wrote of communities called "Bene Israel" in "Surat and Rasapore."[33] He made a sharp distinction between these groups which he called "Israelites," and Jews such as those to be found in Cochin. The Bene Israel were Israelites, whom he connected with the Lost Tribes of Israel who were exiled from the Land of Israel, whereas real Jews were

[32] J. G. Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India: Identity in a Colonial Era* (Lebanon, NH, 1989), 12; N. Katz, *Who Are the Jews of India?* (Oakland, 2000) 92; N. Katz and E. Goldberg, *Kashrut, Caste and Kabbalah: The Religious Life of the Jews of Cochin* (New Delhi, 2005); Nathan Katz and Ellen S. Goldberg, "The Last Jews of India and Burma," *Jerusalem Letter* 101 (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, April 15, 1988); W. Fischel, "Bombay in Jewish History in the Light of New Documents from the Indian Archives," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 38–9 (1972), 119–44; M. A. Berk and J. A. Huie, *The History of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity to the Present Time: Comprising Their Conquests, Dispersions, Wanderings, Persecutions, Commercial Enterprises, Literature, Manners, Customs, and Forms of Worship, with an Account of the Various Efforts Made for Their Conversion* (London, 1849); Walter J. Fischel, "The Jewish Merchant-Colony in Madras (Fort St. George) during the 17th and 18th Centuries: A Contribution to the Economic and Social History of the Jews in India (Concluded)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3, 2 (Aug., 1960), 175–95.

[33] *Notices of Madras and Cuddalore in the Last Century from the Journals and Letters of the Earlier Missionaries of the Society Promoting Christian Knowledge* (London, 1858), 162–4. This letter is much remarked upon, e.g. Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India*, 11.

descended from those tribes who remained in the Land of Israel. He provided some information about the Bene Israel: they were partly weavers and partly boatmen and supplied the ships arriving in port towns with food and other necessities. Others among them were soldiers and workers. On the religious front, they recited the *Shema* prayer "like Muslims," practiced circumcision, but they did not know Hebrew or "the books of the Old Testament." They spoke Hindustani – "the language of the country where they reside." They wore turbans and long dresses reaching down to their feet and did not intermarry with other groups. Sartorius explained in his letter that he had received this information from Indian and German Jews resident in Madras. And they, in turn, had received the information from the Jews of Cochin, except for one English Jew from Madras, who had actually conversed with members of the Bene Israel "in the country of Surat."[34]

This account demonstrates that, before 1738, the Jews of Cochin knew about the Bene Israel because, in the description of the community, which appears to be a conflation of two different communities, there is sufficient detail, unique to the Konkan Bene Israel, to support the conclusion that the accounts coming from the Indian and German Jews resident in Madras actually pertained to them. It seems probable but not certain that the Jews of Surat to whom he referred were the Arabic-speaking Jews to whom reference has already been made – although there may well have been Bene Israel too in Surat at this time. Those of Rasapore – no doubt he meant Rajapore – probably belonged to the Bene Israel community. There are a number of towns with the name of Rajapore in India but probably he had in mind the small town south of Bombay in Maharashtra, not far from the Bene Israel heartlands. Built on an inlet not far from the coast, the town was "the gateway into the rich cities of central Deccan, and the center of a thriving Arabia–India commerce."[35] Certainly, a hundred years later, we know that there were members of the Bene Israel community living in the town.[36] To what extent – if any – sixteenth-century Jewish refugees from Europe or members of the Cochin communities had influenced the practices of the Bene Israel before the first mention of 1738 is unknown. In fact, prior to Sartorius's letter, there is no documentary evidence at all about this community.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, there were perhaps something in the region of 4,000–5,000 Bene Israel in the Konkan. Their knowledge of Judaism was still rudimentary at most. They knew the *Shema* prayer but otherwise had no knowledge of Hebrew, and celebrated

[34] *Notices of Madras and Cuddalore*.
[35] M. E. Wilbur, *The East India Company* (Stanford, 1945).
[36] *The Jewish Expositor and Friend of Israel*, vol. IX (London, 1824), 266.

a number of festivals, some of which vaguely resembled Jewish holidays. In addition, they respected the Sabbath, and this feature of their life was recorded in the ironical professional caste name of Shanwar Teli or Saturday Oil Presser – they were so called because on the Sabbath they did not press oil.[37] In 1768, Ezekiel Rahabi (1694–1772) wrote a famous report to the Jewish community of Amsterdam, in which he described briefly the Bene Israel. He connected them with "Bene Israel" who, according to him, lived in Sikkim in the Himalayas, and this too, like the reference in Sartorius's letter, must be a nod in the direction of an imagined association between the Bene Israel and the Lost Tribes of Israel.[38] Others lived in Maharashtra "in tents" (which seems unlikely, but the Lost Tribes might have been imagined to live in tents), and with these the Jews of Cochin had had some contact. The Cochinis had sent them teachers to instruct them in Judaism, but they had failed in their task. Subsequently, some Bene Israel had come to Cochin, had acquired some learning, and had then returned some years later to teach the community.[39] Back in the Konkan, they took on the role of hereditary religious leaders called "Kaji."

From the eighteenth century, the Bene Israel developed hesitant contacts with other Jewish communities from Iraq and Yemen. In general, communications by the end of the eighteenth century between the Yemen and the Hadhramaut and India were much improved once East India Company ships, and later steamers, started plying between Bombay and Suez, stopping at Mocha on the Red Sea (where there were many Jews) and al-Mukallah on the Hadhrami coast. Hadhramis and Yemenis availed themselves of these swifter means of transport to India, and the contacts between the Jews of Yemen and India, which had existed since medieval times, increased. Yemeni Jews from Sana'a who had settled in Bombay, for instance, played a significant role in introducing the Bene Israel to the practices of more mainstream Judaism. In 1796, the long process of Judaization of the Bene Israel community culminated in the completion of the community's first synagogue in Bombay: Sha'ar ha-Rahamim.[40]

It was in the second half of the eighteenth century that members of the community started moving out of the Konkan to the towns of Panvel, Pen, and Thana, and then to Bombay, which was by then a rapidly expanding

[37] Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India*, 13.

[38] There was a good deal of speculation at the time that the Lost Tribes were to be found northwest, north, or northeast of India.

[39] Koder, "A Hebrew Letter of 1768," 1–6.

[40] *Jewish Expositor*, 9, 265; J. Wolff, *Travels and Adventures of the Rev. Joseph Wolff* (London, 1861); S. B. Isenberg, *India's Bene Israel: A Comprehensive Inquiry and Sourcebook* (Berkeley, 1988).

city. By 1820, there were Bene Israel communities in over twenty towns along the west coast of India, from Surat right down to Cochin. Bombay particularly was much in need of the artisanal, military, and building skills of the Bene Israel. They also excelled as clerks and many of them were to work for the British administration. From tax documents, we know that by 1780–1 Bene Israel merchants were sending lentils, sesame, oil, rice, cloth, and betel nuts, as well as mats and clay pots, by boat and by land routes into the hinterland. Bene Israel soldiers (who would be prominent later) were at this time already serving in Maratha forces. Papers from 1760 describe the presence of Bene Israel sailors on Maratha warships and, by 1798, a number were listed as sepoys. Some of the coastal areas traditionally settled by the Bene Israel were under the rule of the hereditary Maratha admirals called Angrias, others under the Maratha ruler, the Pant Sachiv of Bhor, and others yet under the Muslim Nawab of Janjira, and the Bene Israel served in the armies and fleets of each of these rulers. Later, Bene Israel men also served in the East India Company's British Native Regiments in Bombay. In 1786, a directive to recruiting officers stressed that members of the "Native Jew Caste" of Bombay were likely to be worthy recruits. By 1820, in just one battalion (2nd Battalion, 8th Regiment Bombay Native Infantry), there were around forty Bene Israel enlisted.[41]

In the early years of the nineteenth century, various Christian missions, including the American Marathi Mission, worked with the community, and paradoxically did much to strengthen its Jewish identity. The very presence of this "exotic," dark-skinned "Lost Tribe" in India was a proof of the veracity of Scripture and no effort was spared to educate them, in the hope (largely unrealized) that they would accept Christian teaching. As part of this process, the American mission, for instance, set up schools for them where Hebrew was taught. Their efforts did not, by and large, persuade the other Jews of India, either the Cochinis or the Baghdadis, that the Bene Israel were in fact of Jewish origin. Given that to all appearances the Bene Israel traditionally were Indians, spoke Marathi, worshipped in a small construction they called a *masjid* and had no known contact before the eighteenth century with Jews, it was tempting to believe that the Bene Israel were originally Muslims, perhaps Muslim sectarians, who had for some unknown reason lost their affiliation with Islam.[42] Perhaps, indeed, they had something to do with the Indian

[41] *Jewish Expositor*, 9, 261.

[42] B. J. Ness, "The Saturday Oil Pressers: The Bene Israel in the Konkan," in Roger D. Long, ed., *Charisma and Commitment in South Asian History: Essays Presented to Stanley Wolpert* (Bangalore, 2004), 105; W. Fischel, "Bombay in Jewish History in the Light of New Documents from the Indian Archives," *Proceedings of the American Academy for*

Muslim communities calling themselves "Banu Israil" who lived in a number of *loci* in India, notably Aligarh and Sambal on the Ganges, and who variously claimed descent from the Lost Ten Tribes or from Abdullah bin Salam – a Jew mentioned in the Quran. The chief difference, it might be argued, was that the Bene Israel of Bombay for some reason had more or less lost touch with Islam, while the other groups maintained a strong but eccentric Islamic identity. However, new evidence emerged in the early years of this century, from genetic research conducted among the remaining Bene Israel in India, which demonstrated that there were after all apparent links between the Bene Israel and both South Arabia and the Levant at some time in the remote past. This research to some extent seems to vindicate the cherished historical self-narrative of the Bene Israel.[43]

COCHIN

The Jews of Cochin (today called Kochi) are the best-known of the far-flung Jewish communities of the East, and their famous Paradesi synagogue in Cochin's Jew Town enjoys international renown. One of the unique features of the Cochin Jewish community was that it was divided into a number of apparently discrete groups: the so-called White Jews, Black Jews, and *meshuhrarim* (Hebrew: "freed or manumitted slaves").[44] Cochin is home to what was probably the earliest Jewish community east of Persia, which in the early modern period was still widely perceived as constituting a remnant of the Lost Tribes. Local oral traditions connect the beginnings of the community with Jewish exiles fleeing the Land of Israel after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. According to these accounts, Jews reached Shingly (Cranganore) where they were well received by the local rulers, one of whom, Chereman Perumal, had a charter inscribed on two copper plates promising the Jews certain rights. Jews also settled in Madai, Palur, Calicut, Muttam, and Cochin, as well as other smaller villages. Cochin itself became important only after 1342, when a flood changed the shape of the coastline causing the ancient port at Cranganore to silt up.[45]

Jewish Research 38–9 (1972); Isenberg, *India's Bene Israel*; N. Katz, R. Chakravarti, B. M. Sinha, and S. Weil, eds., *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A Perspective from the Margin* (New York, 2007).

[43] Tudor Parfitt, "Descended from Jewish Seed: Genetics and Jewish History in India – the Bene Israel and the Black Jews of Cochin," *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 6 (2003), 7–18; T. Parfitt and Y. Egorova, *Genetics, Mass Media, and Identity: A Case Study of the Genetic Research on the Lemba and Bene Israel* (London, 2005).

[44] D. G. Mandelbaum, "Social Stratification among the Jews of Cochin in India and in Israel," in A. Timberg, ed., *Jews of India* (Sahibabad, 1986).

[45] J. B. Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin* (London, 1993).

In the imagination of the community, Shingly was a lost Eden. With the destruction of this port, the community moved 30 miles south to Cochin, demonstration in itself of the commercial orientation of the community. Here they established themselves as traders, farmers, and spice merchants with a particular interest in pepper. The relatively easy life they enjoyed in Cochin was not improved by the coming of the Portuguese. But nor was it destroyed. The first Portuguese Viceroy, Francisco de Almeida, established his headquarters in Cochin in 1505 but these were subsequently moved to Goa. The port town of Cochin grew in importance directly because of Portuguese Indo-European trading activity in which Jews were tolerated. However, the Jews were always protected by the local Indian ruler, the Maharaja of Cochin. For the first time, Jews were in direct communication with their coreligionists in western Europe. The arrival of Jewish refugees expelled from Spain and Portugal in the first years of the sixteenth century transformed the community. Grafting their own traditions and codes of knowledge onto the indigenous ones, they created a rich fusion of cultures, reflected in the unique local *minhag*.

The Portuguese ruled Cochin, directly or indirectly, from 1498 to 1663 and this period witnessed persecutions Jews had never before experienced in India. Nonetheless, during the Portuguese period the community developed and succeeded in building the famous Paradesi synagogue. Their golden age, however, undoubtedly came during the Dutch period from 1663 to 1788, which saw both an efflorescence of cultural life and also remarkable success in the economic sphere, dominated by the Rahabi family. The towering figure of Ezekiel Rahabi (1694–1771) has received some treatment from scholars. Agent of the Dutch, advisor and prime minister to the Maharajah, and leader of his own community, he was according to Katz "the central Jewish figure in the economic life in Cochin in the eighteenth century." Rahabi wrote that in 1767 the White Jews comprised 40 families. The Black Jews according to him accounted for about 130 families in Cochin, 100 families at Ernakulam, 100 families in Parur, 50 families in Mala, and 90 families in Muttam. A new community was founded by Rahabi himself on the island of Tirtur. By 1781, according to a report by the Dutch Governor, there were 150 families in Cochin, 100 families in Ernakulam, and 100 families in Parur.

The issue of the stratification of Cochin Jewry has been studied by a number of scholars. One of the earliest sources reflecting the relationship between these pseudo-castes takes the form of letters written around 1540 which were sent from Cochin to the chief rabbi of Egypt David ben Zimra (1479–1573), known as the Radbaz, explaining that the community was split into *meyuhhasim* ("notables") and the descendants of slaves who were, notwithstanding, very pious. The *meyuhhasim* rejected the claim of

the ex-slaves to be Jewish at all and refused to intermarry with them. The reply from Cairo ordered them to "permit this great congregation to join the community of Israel, to remove from them the hatred and the strife, since they keep all the mitzvoth as Jews, it is forbidden to call them slaves." This had little effect. The Black Jews were considerably more numerous than the White and had seven synagogues on the Malabar coast, two each in Cochin and Ernakulam, and one each in Mala, Parur and Chennamangalam. Yet the Black and White communities kept their distance from each other. Although in some sense the division of the community into color castes appears to reflect the Indian caste system, there is reason to believe that prevailing European attitudes toward color and race, among Jews as well as gentiles, introduced by western Jews, the Portuguese, Dutch, and British, also played a role in maintaining color barriers and in keeping the Cochin communities apart.[46] The Radbaz would undoubtedly have been pleased to know that, around 450 years after the composition of his responsum, genetic research carried out on the Black Jews demonstrated that indeed they were descended from a population which had once inhabited the Middle East and which is likely to have been Jewish.[47]

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[46] J. B. Segal, "White and Black Jews at Cochin: The Story of a Controversy," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1983); Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World*.

[47] Parfitt, "Descended from Jewish Seed," 7–18.

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CHAPTER 39

THE JEWS OF IRAN IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

VERA B. MOREEN

The chronological framework of the history of Iranian Jewry, perhaps the oldest continuous Jewish diaspora in existence,[1] does not truly parallel that of Western Jewry. Even as the latter were experiencing the strong backlash of the Counter-Reformation and the increasing benefits of the Age of Enlightenment leading to Emancipation, two major events that sandwiched, as it were, the lives of Iranian Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries took place in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first was the forced conversion of Iran's largely Sunnī population to the Shīʿī form of Islam during the reign of Shāh Ismaʿīl I (1501–24), the founder of the Ṣafavid dynasty; and the second, the torturous path toward at least partial civic equality for Iran's minorities (most of which occurred during the reign of Nasir al-Dīn Shāh [1848–96]). Both continue to be complex and vexing issues, to some degree, in contemporary Iran. Absent many of the socio-economic and intellectual forces that shaped European Jewish Emancipation, Iran's Jews were buffeted by these two internal struggles in which they played a distinctly minor role.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

It is the long-lasting effects of Iran's "Shīʿītization" that shaped Iranian Jewish history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even as they pointed the way toward the Jews' eventual emancipation, however late in coming. The process of "Shīʿītization" began and continued during the Ṣafavid dynasty (1501–1736), a period that marked a major turning point in the history of Iran and led to the formation of its modern boundaries as a

[1] Its formation is traditionally dated either to 722 BCE, the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians and the exile of the Ten Tribes, or 586 BCE, the destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar and the exile of numerous Jews to Babylonia.

nation-state. Shāh Ismāʿīl I, the founder of the dynasty, proclaimed himself Shāh in 1501, at the age of 15, and by 1510 ruled over the largest territory the kingdom ever possessed in the Ṣafavid era. Having set in motion the forced conversion of the largely Sunnī population to Shīʿīsm, a complicated process that actually took considerably longer than his reign,[2] Ismāʿīl I certainly had other priorities than the Jewish minority in his realm.[3] Most of his attention was focused on defeating neighbouring Sunnī foes, primarily the Turkoman Āq quyūnlū ("White Sheep") and Qarā quyūnlū ("Black Sheep") tribes, the Uzbeks, and the Ottomans. "Shīʿītization" was just one of the means by which he endeavored to separate the identity of his realm from those of his Sunnī neighbors. In fact, very little is known to date about Ismāʿīl's attitude toward Jews. Tomé Pires, the Portuguese ambassador to China, who passed through Iran in 1511–12, commented, "He [Shāh Ismāʿīl] reforms our churches, destroys the houses of all Moors [Sunnīs?], and never spares the life of any Jew."[4] Another traveler, Raphaël du Mans, wrote in the 1660s, "So deep is his [Ismāʿīl's] hate that whenever he sees a Jew he orders to put out his eyes."[5] These two isolated statements remain uncorroborated.

Reliable information about Iran's Jews under the Ṣafavids begins to appear only with the reign of Shāh ʿAbbās I (1581–1629), for while Iranian historiography was relatively developed by Ṣafavid times, it consisted primarily of events connected with ruling dynasties and had scant, if any, light to shed on the particular topic of religious minorities. As for Iranian Jewish historiography, it also appears to have begun only in Shāh ʿAbbās I's reign. Bābāī ibn Luṭf's *Kitāb-i anusī* [The Book of a Forced Convert] (*KA*) is the first known Judeo-Persian chronicle[6] and it recounts the periodic persecution of Iranian Jews between 1617 and 1662, including selected events from the reigns of shāhs ʿAbbās I, Ṣafī I (1629–42), and ʿAbbās II

[2] Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London, 2004), esp. ch. 1 and pp. 61–8, 80–1.

[3] While exact demographic information about Iran's Jewish population is lacking, it is known that its size was substantial from the early Middle Ages on (and no doubt since antiquity) and that it was widely dispersed throughout Iran and the Persianate world (see Vera Basch Moreen, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* [New York, 2009], XV, *s.v.* "Judeo-Persian Communities of Iran: Medieval to the Late 18th Century," 103–8).

[4] Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India 1512–1515* (London, 1944), I, 27.

[5] Raphaël Du Mans, *Estat de la Perse en 1660* (Paris, 1890), 274.

[6] Judeo-Persian is Persian in Hebrew script with a number of linguistic idiosyncrasies. For a general idea of writings in Judeo-Persian over the span of a millennium, see Vera Basch Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden: An Anthology of Judeo-Persian Literature* (New Haven, 2000).

(1642–66).[7] Since *KA* also refers to a few events unrelated to Jews that are corroborated by Iranian chronicles (primarily *ʿAbbāsnāma* [The Book of ʿAbbās] by Muḥammad Ṭāhir Waḥīd Qazvīnī), Bābāī ibn Luṭf, a native of Kāshān and a witness to some of the events he records, is considered a reliable historical source. He mentions several anti-Jewish incidents that occurred in the reign of ʿAbbās I, such as that monarch's violent reaction to accusations of magic against his person made by two bickering factions in the Jewish community of Isfahan. The episode, corroborated by the Italian traveler Pietro della Valle, recounts how the Shāh punished the community by presenting it with the option to convert to (Shīʿī) Islam or be devoured by ferocious hounds. It appears that a few Jewish leaders preferred martyrdom, but that the community as a whole converted temporarily.[8] ʿAbbās I also forcibly relocated some Jews (just as he had forcibly moved conquered Armenians and Georgians throughout the kingdom) to Faraḥābād (Persian: "Abode of Joy"), a winter resort he had newly built on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. He also sided with the Jewish apostate Abū'l Ḥasan Lārī, who tried to compel his coreligionists throughout Iran to wear a demeaning headdress.[9] However, the Jews were not the only group that suffered as a result of ʿAbbās I's policies, which were intended primarily to consolidate the kingdom and eliminate all possible rivals. While there is no information regarding the number of Iranian Jews who may have converted during his reign, Bābāī ibn Luṭf writes that the Jews regained full religious freedom during the reign of Shāh Ṣafī I.[10]

The intermittent persecutions that began during the reign of ʿAbbās I intensified significantly during the reign of Shah ʿAbbās II. The Grand Vizier Muḥammad Beg (d. 1674) appears to have been chiefly responsible (with the Shāh's consent) for the intense effort to convert all the Jews to Shīʿī Islam between 1656 and 1662. Judging by the account in *KA*, Muḥammad Beg's initial motivation was religious zeal rather than outright covetousness (Iranian Jews occupied the lower tiers of the economy – see below). However, even though at first he rewarded the new converts monetarily, Muḥammad Beg demanded the money back, even retroactively, along with payment of the temporarily suspended *jizya*,[11] from all who returned to Judaism. The Muslim inhabitants of a number of communities, including Faraḥābād, Gulpāygān, Khurramābād, Khūnsār, and Yazd, as well as a few important Muslim officials and divines (notably the

[7] Vera Basch Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism: A Study of Bābāī Ibn Luṭf's Chronicle (1617–1662)* (New York, 1987).
[8] Ibid., 57–8 and Appendix A. [9] Ibid., 80–6. [10] Ibid., 93–4.
[11] The capitation tax paid by the "People of the Book" (Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians) in Muslim lands (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., *s.v.* "Djizya").

famous Shīʿī scholar and theologian Mullāh Muḥsin Fayż-i Kāshānī [d. 1680]), refused to implement the extreme order of conversion, demonstrating thereby that local leaders were capable of and successful in defying the central authority of the court, a pervasive feature of Iran's monarchy in general. But major Jewish communities close to the capital Isfahan converted under pressure and their members became *anusim* (Hebrew: "forced converts"), outwardly complying with the tenets of Shīʿī Islam while practicing Judaism in secret, for approximately seven years.[12] It is important to point out that the Jews were not the only minority persecuted at this time. Armenian Christians, many affluent from their monopoly (on the shāh's behalf) of the silk trade, were similarly maltreated so that their wealth could be confiscated, while Iran's ancient Zoroastrian communities were also hounded, out of religious intolerance. The Armenian historian Arakel of Tabrīz,[13] as well as Muḥammad Ṭāhir Waḥīd Qazvīnī, the chief chronicler of Shāh ʿAbbās II's reign,[14] and the missionary account *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*,[15] confirm many of these events in detail.[16]

Shāh ʿAbbās II eventually annulled Muḥammad Beg's repressive policies, and the latter's machinations, in these as well as other events, brought about his downfall.[17]

The persecutions had long-lasting and deleterious effects. They not only scarred Iran's Jewish communities deeply, both spiritually and materially, but set a dangerous precedent. As the power of the Shīʿī hierocracy increased during the subsequent reigns of shāhs Sulaymān (1620–94) and Sulṭān Ḥusayn (1694–1722), non-Muslim minorities, as well as Ṣūfīs (Muslim mystics), increasingly became targets of religious intolerance. The Jews' increasingly precarious situation was not helped by the fact that the false messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi (d. *c.* 1676) spread through Iran during the reign of Shāh Sulaymān. The famous French

[12] This situation mirrored, and perhaps even imitated, the Shīʿī practice of *ṭaqiya* [Ar./Persian: "dissimulation"] embraced by Shīʿīs, in Sunnī lands, or whenever encountering danger, into the present (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., *s.v.* "Ṭakiyya").

[13] Arakel of Tabrīz, *Patmut'iwn Aṙak'el Vardapeti Dawrižets'woy*, ed. and trans. M. I. Brosset, in Brosset, ed., *Collection d'historiens Arméniens*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1874–6); George Bournoutian, trans., *The History of Vardapat Arakel of Tabriz* (Costa Mesa, CA, 2005).

[14] Muḥammad Ṭāhir Waḥīd Qazvīnī, *ʿAbbāsnāma* (Arak, 1951).

[15] *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, 2 vols. (London, 1939).

[16] Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril*, 62–79 and Appendices C and D.

[17] Vera B. Moreen, "The Downfall of Muḥammad [ʿAlī] Beg, Grand Vizier of Shah ʿAbbās II (r. 1642–1666)," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 72 (1981), 81–99; Rudi (Rudolph) Matthee, "The Career of Mohammad Beg, Grand Vizier of Shah ʿAbbas II (r. 1642–1666)," *Iranian Studies* 24 (1991), 17–36.

jeweler and traveler Jean Chardin (Sir John Chardin [1643–1713]) mentions that the Jews of Hyrcania (Gurgān) were so confident of the advent of the messiah that they refused to pay the *jizya.*[18]

Little or no historical information regarding Iranian Jews is available for the half-century between 1662 and 1722, the period between the end of *KA* and the beginning of the second Judeo-Persian chronicle (see below). The *Chronicle of the Carmelites* relates a distressing episode from this interim, dating from 1678. A severe drought had caused a sharp rise in the price of corn and all men prayed for rain. Apparently, some unidentified clerics, fearing the effectiveness of non-Shīʿī prayers, complained to Shāh Sulaymān that Jews and Armenian Christians had schemed to nullify the effectiveness of Muslim prayers. The Shāh ordered that the rabbi and two notables of Isfahan be put to death and prohibited their burial until their bodies were ransomed. Apparently, as a result of this incident, many Jews fled Isfahan while those who remained behind were heavily fined. The Armenian Christians were also fined at the same time but less heavily, no doubt because of their greater economic value to the state and the protection afforded them by various western powers.[19]

By the early eighteenth century, foreign and internal pressures had weakened the Ṣafavid kingdom. The Ghilzāy Afghans conquered Qandahār in 1709, and the anemic Ṣafavid response encouraged them to invade Iran. Their chieftain, Maḥmūd, defeated the Ṣafavids at Gulnābād and besieged Isfahan. The siege ended on October 25, 1722, after a devastating famine that lasted seven months, and the Afghan chieftain accepted the Iranian crown from the hands of the Shah himself, even though the kingdom, as a whole, remained unconquered.

The short-lived reigns of the two Afghan rulers, Maḥmūd (1722–5) and Ashraf (1725–30), mark a low point in the history of Iran. It was simultaneously attacked by the Ottomans and Russians while various pretenders fought each other to reclaim the Ṣafavid throne. Obviously, no social or religious group was immune to the hardships of such a turbulent era. It is not surprising, then, that Iranian Jews were also greatly affected. The *Kitāb-i Sar Guzasht-i Kāshān dar bāb-i ʾIbrī va Goyimi-yi Sānī* [The Book of Events in Kāshān Concerning the Jews: Their Second Conversion] (*KS*), the second known Judeo-Persian chronicle, written by Bābāī ben Farhād, the grandson of Bābāī ibn Luṭf, recounts many of their

[18] Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient* (Paris, 1811), VI, 135; and G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, 1973), 637ff. and 752–3. It is not yet possible to assess the spread of this movement among Iranian Jews in detail.

[19] *Chronicle*, I, 408.

travails. The author lived through the collapse of the Ṣafavid dynasty and the invasions of the Afghans, Ottomans, and Russians. He refers to these external events only sketchily as his focus is, primarily, on how they affected specific Jewish communities (especially Kāshān, his native town) over the span of a decade (1721–31). Bābāī ben Farhād's narrative concentrates especially on incidents in Kāshān over a period of seven months between 1729 and 1730 as they related to the short-lived apostasy of its Jewish community.

The framework of *KS* is the rise to power of the Turkoman General Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khān, the future Nādir Shāh (1736–47). A successful warrior from his youth, Nādir distinguished himself during the Afghan raid on Iran and came to the attention of the Ṣafavid Prince Ṭahmāsp II (r. 1722–32) as a potential rescuer of his dynasty – besieged, as noted above, by multiple foes. Nādir adopted the honorific "Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khān" (Persian: "slave of Ṭahmāsp") and went on to defeat the Afghans between 1729 and 1730. He then installed Ṭahmāsp II as shāh and became his regent. Between 1729 and 1735, Nādir conducted several, mostly victorious, military campaigns against the Ottomans and the Russians, and concluded successful peace treaties with both that restored, and even enlarged to some extent, the borders of the Ṣafavid kingdom.

In 1729, during this period of almost continuous conflict, Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khān, while passing through Kāshān, precipitated the temporary conversion to Shīʿī Islam of its Jewish community. According to *KS*, the general imposed heavy taxes and plundered many of the towns through which he passed in order to finance his campaigns. He demanded a large sum from the Jews of Kāshān and, although important Shīʿī divines, such as Mīr Abū'l Qāsim (probably the same individual who was later a high-ranking religious official at Nādir Shāh's court[20]), and Nasi (Hebrew: "President") David of the Jewish community tried to intercede, the demand remained in force. Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khān accepted at first some (unspecified) thousands of *tūmāns*,[21] but later increased his demand. This led Nasi David and other communal leaders to convert "voluntarily" and force, in effect, the rest of the community (despite some marked resistance, especially on the part of women) to do so as well, in order to avoid virtual impoverishment and, perhaps, a danger to their very lives. The conversion was fictitious as the Jews merely became *anusim.* Approximately seven months later, as a result of further intercessions and

[20] Vera B. Moreen, *Iranian Jewry during the Aghan Invasion: The Kitāb-i Sar Guzasht-i Kāshān of Bābāī b. Farhād* (Stuttgart, 1990), 34 n. 152, and the sources cited there.

[21] For the value of the *tūmān*, see Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril*, 20–1 n. 8, and the sources cited there.

more payments, Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khān relented and permitted the Jews of Kāshān to return to their faith openly.[22]

This incident was not the only one connecting Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khān with Iran's Jews. In 1736, the General had accepted, "reluctantly," the crown of Iran at an assembly of tribal warriors, who acknowledged him as Iran's "liberator," and he became "Nādir Shāh." This event effectively ended the rule of the Ṣafavids and initiated the brief rule of Nādir's Afshārid dynasty (1736–95). Nādir Shāh's military campaigns continued and he defeated the Afghans in their homeland in 1738, proceeding to conquer India in 1739. During the latter campaign, he "sacked" Delhi and plundered the realm of great wealth, including the famous Peacock Throne and the Kūhi Nūr diamond. Shortly thereafter, in the course of major population transfers, Nādir Shāh relocated some forty (more came later) Jewish families, chiefly from Qazvīn, to Mashhad (in Khurāsān, eastern Iran), the city he intended to become his eastern capital and where his tomb is located. This move was rather eccentric because Mashhad is the burial site of the tomb of ʿAlī ben Mūsā al-Riżā (d. 818), the eighth Imām of Twelver Shīʿīsm, and, as such, particularly guarded by Shīʿī believers from the *najāsat* (Ar./Persian: "impurity") of non-Muslims. The oral tradition of Mashhad's Jews maintains that the Shāh's action was motivated by a wish to entrust the Jews (because, apparently, he could not trust anyone else) with his new treasures in the fortress known as Qalʿat-i Nādirī. Perhaps an additional explanation for his apparent tolerance of the Jews can be found in Nādir Shāh's highly pragmatic religious views. He attempted to promote Shīʿīsm as a fifth (as against the Sunnī four) orthodox "school," referring to it as "mazhab-i Jaʿfarī" (Ar./Persian: "the [religious law] school of Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq [d. 765], the sixth Imām of Twelver Shīʿīsm"), probably in order to promote a rapprochement with the Ottomans, or in the hope of future conquests in the Sunnī world – or both.[23] That the choice of Mashhad was unfortunate for the Jews became evident when, only a century later, the Jewish community there, which had grown and prospered, was dealt a traumatic blow in 1839, an event known by its Persian "honorific," *Allāhdād* (Persian: "God-gave"), when it was forced to convert to Shīʿī Islam. These Jews remained *anusim* well into modern

[22] Moreen, *Iranian Jewry during the Afghan Invasion*, 35–56.

[23] This synopsis of Nādir Shāh's career is based on Peter Avery, "Nādir Shāh and the Afshārid Legacy," in *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge, 1961–91), VII, 3–51; Michael Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant* (London, 2006); and John R. Perry, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, s.v.* "Nādir Shāh Afshār."

times, and even when they returned to Judaism continued to retain a distinct identity.[24]

Nādir Shāh's campaigns grew increasingly more ferocious toward both external and suspected internal enemies, including his own sons. Even suspected of madness, he was assassinated by some members of his entourage in 1747.

Given the flare-up of these persecutions, it is not particularly surprising to find that some Iranian Jews sympathized with the Afghan invaders of Iran in the hope that Sunnī rule might lighten their burdens. Bābāī ben Farhād mentions that Ashraf killed Maḥmūd as well as many Shī'īs but was generous toward the Jews of Kāshān.[25] We also find that Benjamin ben Misha'el (known by the *nom de plume* "Amīnā" ["the Faithful"]), a seventeenth-century Jewish poet from Kāshān (see below), actually wrote a panegyric in honor of Ashraf.[26]

The Afshār and Zand (1750–96) dynasties do not provide reliable historical information about Iranian Jews, although some Judeo-Persian literary texts can be traced to this period. The historical trail picks up again at the dawn of the modern era, during the rule of the Qājār dynasty (1779–1924).

The precedent for purchasing freedom of worship having been set in the seventeenth century, the Jews of Iran lived under the threat of its annulment throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries.

ECONOMIC AND INTELLECTUAL TRENDS

In the early Middle Ages, Iranian Jews were considerably involved in commerce and in all aspects of the textile – especially the silk – industries.[27] However, by the seventeenth century, they were displaced from these lucrative pursuits by Armenian Christians, and occupied the lower strata of the economy as weavers, farmers, dyers, minstrels, and butchers serving the Jewish community. Chardin describes the state of the Jews he saw thus: "ils sont pauvres et misérables partout"[28] – artisans, small-scale "usurers," purveyors of medical and magical services, with Jewish women having access to the women's quarters of rulers. Although Iranian Jews were also "bankers" to some degree in the early Middle Ages, by the seventeenth

[24] Raphael Patai, *Jadīd al-Islām: The Jewish "New Muslims" of Meshhed* (Detroit, 1997); Hilda Nissimi, *The Crypto-Jewish Mashhadis: The Shaping of Religious and Communal Identity in Their Journey from Iran to New York* (Brighton, 2007).

[25] Moreen, *Iranian Jewry during the Afghan Invasion*, 31–3.

[26] Moreen, *Queen Esther's Garden*, 292–3.

[27] Moreen, "Judeo-Persian Communities of Iran."

[28] Chardin, *Voyages*, VI, 133–4.

century they were entirely supplanted by the Hindu Bāniāns. The financial straits of various Jewish communities are highlighted in both Judeo-Persian chronicles, which describe vividly the great hardships endured by them due to the demands of paying the *jizya.* It is clear in outline, then, even if many details are yet to be unearthed (if possible), that the economic status of Iranian Jews declined continuously in pre-modern Iran and reached its nadir in the nineteenth century.

The almost three-millennia-long Jewish sojourn in Iran resulted in profound acculturation even as the Jews succeeded in maintaining a distinct identity. This is most apparent in the fields of literature and the applied arts, both of which appear to have flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although the spoken language of Iranian Jews reflected local dialects as well as some dialects peculiar to themselves – such as the hybrid *lo-Torah[ī]* (Hebrew + Pers. adjectival suffix *-ī*), meaning "non-Torahic," a dialect combining both Semitic (Hebrew and Aramaic) and Persian elements[29] – these Jews used Judeo-Persian (Fārsī in Hebrew script), close to *dārī* ("court") classical Persian, when expressing themselves in writing – with the addition of some colloquial features.[30] Remarkably, the earliest traces of New Persian appeared in Judeo-Persian, that is, in the Hebrew alphabet, as tomb inscriptions in Afghanistan dating from the eighth century. The Jews of Iran, and those in the broader Persianate world (including Afghanistan and Bukhārā), held on to the Hebrew alphabet for written communication in the vernacular, as did the Jews in many parts of the world. While the majority of early Judeo-Persian texts tend to be biblical commentaries testifying to Iranian Jewry's thorough familiarity with biblical and many post-biblical sacred texts, the apex of Judeo-Persian literature was attained in the biblical epics of Shāhīn (fl. fourteenth century) and ʿĪmrānī (1454 – after 1536), which imitate the great Persian epic poetry of Iran, in particular Ferdowsī's *Shāh-nāmah* [The Book of Kings] written in 1010.[31]

The most important Judeo-Persian manuscript collections in Israel and the United States include a wide variety of genres: translations of the Bible, secular and religious poetry, chronicles, rabbinical works, grammatical treatises, translations of medieval Hebrew poetry, transcriptions of classical Persian poetry and original epics. *Belles lettres*, especially poetry, dominate all manuscript collections confirming Iranian Jews' love of verse, a love

[29] Ehsan Yarshater, "The Hybrid Language of the Jewish Communities of Persia," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97 (1977), 1–7.

[30] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., *s.v.* "Judeo-Persian ii. Language."

[31] Amnon Netzer, *Muntakhab-i ʿashār-i fārisī az āsār-i yahudiyān-i Īrān* [An Anthology of Persian Poetry of the Jews of Iran] (Tehran, 1973), 9–260; Moreen, *Queen Esther's Garden*, 26–143.

they shared with their Muslim neighbors. By the seventeenth century, Shāhīn and ʿImrānī acquired quite a few imitators, such as Aḥaron ben Mashiaḥ, Khwājah Bukhārā'ī ("of Bukhara"), and Yehudah ben David.[32]

KA and *KS*, the two Judeo-Persian chronicles referred to above, are, so far, the only known historical texts penned by Iranian Jews. They transcend in importance the limited confessional-perspective context from which they emerged as they impart detailed information about the lives of ordinary people – data completely ignored by royal Iranian chronicles.

The seventeenth century also produced the only known Judeo-Persian philosophical treatise, *Ḥobot Yehudah* [Hebrew: The Duties of Judah] (*ḤY*) by Rabbi Yehudah ben Elʿazar, a learned rabbi and physician from Kāshān, written in 1660/1. It relies chiefly on the works of Moses Maimonides (d. 1240) and demonstrates the author's familiarity with several works by major Jewish philosophers. Ben Elʿazar expounds on many theological, metaphysical, and scientific topics, and peppers his work with anti-Muslim polemics.[33] The most important mystical-philosophical work in Judeo-Persian, *Ḥayāt al-ruḥ* [Ar.: The Life of the Soul], was written by Siman Tov Melammed (d. 1823 or 1828) in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. It is influenced by both Persian and eleventh-century Andalusian Ṣūfī lore.[34]

Numerous Iranian Jews wrote short religious and secular poems in Hebrew and Persian (and some in both), clearly influenced by both literary traditions. The most noteworthy among them were Benjamin ben Misha'el (d. after 1732),[35] who also wrote several bilingual poems; the Bukhārān Yūsuf Yahūdī (d. *c.* 1788);[36] Shihāb Yazdī (eighteenth century);[37] and Siman Ṭov Melammed (see above).

Iranian Jews also emulated the tradition of Persian illuminated manuscripts and miniature paintings which are justly famous in the world of art. Of the thirteen Judeo-Persian illuminated manuscripts known so far, none dates to earlier than the seventeenth century. The best illuminated Judeo-Persian manuscripts illustrate the epics of Shāhīn and ʿImrānī (see above), imitating the pictorial tradition of the *Shāh-nāmah*, although these efforts cannot be compared with the great masterpieces of Persian miniature

[32] Netzer, *Muntakhab*, 261–97, 369–76; Moreen, *Queen Esther's Garden*, 143–58.

[33] Amnon Netzer, ed. and trans., *Ḥobot Yehudah le-Rabbi Yehudah ben El'azar* [Duties of Judah by Rabbi Yehudah Ben Elʿazar] (Jerusalem, 1995) – see the Introduction; Vera B. Moreen, "A Seventeenth-Century Iranian Rabbi's Polemical Remarks on Jews," in Michel M. Mazzaoui, ed., *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors* (Salt Lake City, 2003), 157–68.

[34] Netzer, *Muntakhab*, 366–8; Moreen, *Queen Esther's Garden*, 260–5.

[35] Netzer, *Muntakhab*, 351–64; Moreen, *Queen Esther's Garden*, see Index.

[36] Wilhelm Bacher, "Der Dichter Jûsuf Jehûdi und sein Lob Moses," *ZDMG* 53 (1899), 389–427; Moreen, *Queen Esther's Garden*, 273–6.

[37] Netzer, *Muntakhab*, 377–8; Moreen, *Queen Esther's Garden*, 268–72.

paintings produced in the royal workshops, and resemble more their less accomplished provincial cousins.[38] Some of these manuscripts excel in their calligraphy and are covered by handsome tooled leather bindings; a very few have nineteenth-century lacquered bindings. The patrons of such manuscripts are mostly unknown but it may be assumed that they were leading members of important Jewish communities, such as Isfahan and Kāshān.

Iranian Jews also made significant contributions to music, especially as great instrumentalists, and to the various crafts. Many of their accomplishments await further research.

CONCLUSION

Despite considerable physical and economic hardships, the Jews of Iran prevailed in an increasingly hostile environment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their accelerating decline through the late Middle Ages into the pre-modern era stands in considerable contrast to the experience of their brethren not only in western Europe, but in the neighboring Ottoman Empire as well.[39] The absence of uniformity in implementing discriminatory legislation against them and the fact that anti-religious persecutions never truly became accepted state policy aided the survival of this ancient diaspora which was – and continues to be – deeply attached to its homeland.

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[38] See, especially, SPK or. Qu 1680 and IM 180/54 in Vera Basch Moreen, *Miniature Paintings in Judeo-Persian Manuscripts* (Cincinnati, 1985).

[39] Cf. Avidgor Levy, ed., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, 1994).

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CHAPTER 40

TOLERATION, INTEGRATION, REGENERATION, AND REFORM

Rethinking the Roots and Routes of "Jewish Emancipation"

ADAM SUTCLIFFE

Emancipation is the keystone of almost all accounts of the emergence of Jewish modernity. Heinrich Graetz, and liberal Jewish historians writing in his wake in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, looked back at the events of approximately a century earlier as a watershed transition, hauling the Jews of Europe, albeit in a faltering, stop-start fashion, into a new world in which, finally, they could hold their heads high and participate as rightful citizens in the societies in which they lived. The normalization of the political rights of Jews, and their entry into bourgeois society, were readily seen as a particularly lofty fulfilment of the ideals of the Enlightenment, and it was in large measure for this reason that so many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century bourgeois Jews were among the most intense devotees of the ideals and high culture associated with the Enlightenment.[1] Historians of the Jews writing since the Holocaust have been more circumspect with regard to the Enlightenment and its legacy for the Jews of Europe. Accounts of the process that historians still call "Jewish Emancipation" have emphasized the uneven and hesitant unfolding of the extension of political rights to Jews.[2] However, the dominant, though not universal, tone of interpretation has remained broadly positive, framed within a progressive, secularizing teleology that not infrequently harks

[1] Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven, 1999); Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg, eds., *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War* (Lebanon, NH, 1985); Willi Goetschel, "Lessing and the Jews," in Barbara Fischer and Thomas C. Fox, eds., *A Companion to the Works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing* (Rochester, NY, 2005), 185–208.

[2] For the most lucid summary of this process in Germany, in this interpretive vein, see Reinhard Rürup, "The Tortuous and Thorny Path to Legal Equality: 'Jew Laws' and Emancipatory Legislation in Germany from the Late Eighteenth Century," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 31 (1986), 3–33.

back to the most confident rhetorical flourishes of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.[3]

Salo Baron, in his seminal early essay "Ghetto and Emancipation" (1928), was the first scholar to critique the celebratory view of this process, questioning whether, as he put it, the extension of political rights to Jews had really marked "the dawn of a new day after a nightmare of the deepest horror."[4] Baron sought to rehabilitate the medieval Jewish experience in Europe, and pointed out that, with the loss of Jewish communal autonomy, political emancipation had come at a price. However, he did not doubt that the overall impact of this process was favorable, and he remained wedded to a broadly teleological view of legal progress.[5] A much more skeptical approach has been taken by many historians writing from a Zionist perspective. For several early Israeli historians, such as Shmuel Ettinger and Raphael Mahler, the Jews of Europe had been lured into making the fatal mistake of sacrificing their nationhood for the false hope of full integration. Arthur Hertzberg, in his *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (1968), argued that the Enlightenment simply repackaged medieval antisemitism in a new secularist coating. More recently, David Vital has emphasized the grudging nature and statist instrumentalism of Jewish Emancipation, the hostility toward Jews and Judaism of its leading ideologues, and the hollowness of its ameliorative rhetoric.[6]

The historiography on the extension of political rights to Jews is, then, powerfully framed by the ideological perspectives through which historians interpret the modernization of the Jewish world. The strenuous avoidance of the back-shadowing of the Holocaust is also, of course, a freighted perspective, and David Engel has persuasively argued that this has been a dominant approach among historians of the Jews, with Hertzberg's work standing as a notable exception.[7] However, an open perspective is particularly

[3] See David Sorkin, *The Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre's "To the Jews as a Nation . . . ": The Career of a Quotation* (Jerusalem, 2012).

[4] Salo W. Baron, "Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revise the Traditional View?" [*Menorah Journal* 14 (1928)], in Leo W. Schwarz, ed., *The Menorah Treasury: Harvest of Half a Century* (Philadelphia, 1973), 50–63, esp. 50.

[5] See Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmeyer Baron: Architect of Jewish History* (New York, 1995), 39–51; David Engel, "Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobaronianism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History," *Jewish History* (2006), 243–64; David Sorkin, "Salo Baron on Emancipation," *AJS Review* 38 (2014), 423–30.

[6] Jonathan Frankel, "Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-century Europe: Towards a New Historiography?" in Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 1992), 1–34; Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York, 1968); David Vital, *A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe, 1789–1939* (Oxford, 1999), 31–7.

[7] David Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* (Stanford, 2010), esp. 70–8.

important when exploring the early modern antecedents, contexts, and harbingers of the reform of the political status of European Jewry. Eschewing both celebratory and condemnatory perspectives, we first need to attune ourselves to the ways in which discourse relating to Jews in the early modern period was embedded in a complex matrix of broader issues and associations. In order to understand how and why this discourse found a new key in the final two decades of the eighteenth century, we need to identify what changed at that time, and what did not, in the broader theological, economic, and rhetorical contexts that shaped discussions of the political status of Jews. This can enable us to be receptive to the reformist optimism of many of the early advocates for the amelioration of the status of European Jewry, while also mindful of the various religious, instrumentalist, and cultural assumptions that were formative in their thinking.

Although the contours of European debates on Jewish political rights in the period up to 1848, and during the renewed advance of this cause in the 1850s and 1860s, were in large measure shaped by the concepts of the first reformist era between 1780 and 1815, the prevalent political mood of this earlier period was in important respects very different. Whereas in the period following the Congress of Vienna the pace and direction of political change, for Jews particularly but by no means uniquely, was unclear, the earlier revolutionary decades were characterized by a widespread sense among radicals that rapid transformation was both possible and imminent, and that the dissolution of Jewish difference was both likely and desirable. This reformist expectancy started to emerge in the decade before the French Revolution, marking a notable caesura with the period before the 1780s, when the moral, economic, and political position of Jews was only intermittently a matter of public debate, and their corporate separateness and enduring difference were almost universally taken for granted. A key challenge for the historian is to explain what changed around 1780, and why. However, this transition must also be situated within its long-term early modern context of intensifying social and intellectual interaction between Jews and Christians, and of the emergence of pragmatic and utility-based approaches to religious difference, which stretches back in some respects to the late sixteenth century, and arguably even earlier.

The term "Jewish Emancipation" only took grip in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, which was also when the political status of Jews – from the 1840s widely termed "the Jewish Question" – began to be debated as an issue of significant contemporary concern. In his pioneering article on this subject, Jacob Katz dated the introduction of the phrase "Jewish Emancipation" into German debates to 1828, when Wilhelm Krug, a liberal, non-Jewish philosopher and politician in Saxony, imported the

term from the debates then raging in Britain over what had for some time been known as "Catholic emancipation." The British Catholic emancipation movement had adopted their ringing rhetoric from the anti-slavery campaign, and for German Jews and their allies it was immediately appealing to adopt a term that had such emotive force and was also associated with transformations that were clearly in the ascendant (in Britain, the Catholic Relief Act was passed in 1829, and the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833). "Jewish Emancipation" swiftly became a rallying cry for German Jewish intellectuals such as Heinrich Heine, Leopold Zunz, and Gabriel Riesser.[8]

There were a very few isolated uses of this term before the late 1820s: the earliest sighting of the word *Emanzipierung* in relation to Jews, first noted by Katz, is in a defense of the civil rights of the Jews of Frankfurt, published anonymously under the aegis of the Jewish community of that city in 1816, and widely attributed to Ludwig Börne.[9] This reference, which was in any case a passing one, was in fact almost certainly not penned by Börne, who in the same year wrote an essay, unpublished until 1819, in which he sharply distanced himself from what he saw as the belabored argumentative dissection by the Frankfurt community leadership of the "fresh, warm, young" political rights of the Jews that needed to be defended in new, passionate terms, and not as if one were arguing over "a disputed cabbage patch."[10] Not only, then, was the term "emancipation" not in circulation in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, let alone earlier, but there was no consensus among the defenders of Jewish political rights on the terms and arguments in which this case should be couched. Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson, in their excellent comparative volume *Paths of Emancipation* (1995), took the view that this linguistic issue was a relatively minor complicating wrinkle, and that the issues at stake in political debates concerning Jews were "from the start" focused on the issues of civic status and legal equality that in due course became labeled as constituting "Jewish Emancipation."[11] However, this perspective can only be sustained by plucking out a decontextualized pre-history of liberalism from the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century past, largely ignoring the theological, corporatist,

[8] Jacob Katz, "The Term 'Jewish Emancipation': Its Origin and Historical Impact," in Alexander Altmann, ed., *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA, 1964), 1–25.

[9] *Aktenmässige Darstellung des Bürgerrechts der Israeliten zu Frankfurt am Main* (Rödelheim, 1816), 70. See also Katz, "Jewish Emancipation," 16.

[10] Ludwig Börne, *Für die Juden* (1816), in *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Peter and Inge Rippmann, 5 vols. (Dreieich, 1977) I, 177–8.

[11] Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson, "Emancipation and the Liberal Offer," in Birnbaum and Katznelson, eds., *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship* (Princeton, 1998), 3–36, esp. 4–5.

or instrumental assumptions that shaped the terms in which the reformist discourse in relation to Jews first emerged.

The history of Jewish Emancipation has typically been presented as a phased process. For Simon Dubnow, periods of emancipation and of reaction alternated dialectically in modern Jewish history, with the first emancipatory period, driven by the French Revolution, lasting from 1789 to 1815, followed by the first period of reaction, emblematized by Metternich and lasting until 1848. Reinhard Rürup, focusing on Germany, has offered a more gently progressive, although still very uneven, four-stage periodization, with the first phase commencing in 1781 (with the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II's Edict of Tolerance) and lasting until 1815, followed by the more confused Biedermeier period, a brief third period of temporary advance following the revolutions of 1848, and a final phase of completion lasting from 1850 to 1871.[12] A broader comparative framework, however, throws these models into question. In England, for example – where the Jewish community had been from the time of Readmission a voluntary one – the tendency of the elite toward what Todd Endelman has compellingly analyzed as "radical assimilation" was already clearly discernable in the late seventeenth century, and continued into the twentieth, unabated and unaltered by the various nineteenth-century legal and institutional landmarks of the "emancipation" of Anglo-Jewry.[13] In the United States, formal impediments to Jewish political and economic participation were, from the beginning, almost entirely absent – but Jews in America nonetheless experienced particular forms of separateness, precariousness, and prejudice.[14] Rather than approaching the period up to 1815 as the "first phase" of a teleological process, it is more productive to explore the complex intertwinements, from the sixteenth century onwards, between the social, cultural, economic, and legal dimensions of the changing place of Jews in the societies within which they lived.

Much recent historiography has moved in this direction. The Germanocentrism of Katz and others, which permeated most historical thinking on the modernization of European Jewry until the 1970s, has been trenchantly and influentially critiqued by Endelman and many others, and, in David Sorkin's recent argument that, in the period up to 1750, central Europe in fact lagged behind both the Atlantic west and the inland east of the Continent in failing to initiate any new forms of collective entitlement or

[12] Rürup, "Thorny Path," 9.

[13] Todd M. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656–1945* (Bloomington, 1990).

[14] See Ira Katznelson, "Jews on the Margins of American Liberalism," in Katznelson and Birnbaum, eds., *Paths of Emancipation*, 157–205; David Sorkin, "Is American Jewry 'Exceptional?' Comparing Jewish Emancipation in Europe and America," *American Jewish History* 96 (2010), 175–200.

privilege for Jews, implicitly even reversed.[15] The early cogency of mercantilist arguments for the commercial utility of the Jews – for example in the 1638 defense by the Venetian Rabbi Simone Luzzatto of the value of his own community – has been emphasized by Jonathan Karp, while the work of Lois Dubin and others on eighteenth-century "Port Jews" has stressed the particular, local ways in which Jews in maritime centers such as Trieste moved toward civil and cultural inclusion.[16] In many different early modern European contexts, Jews found ways to establish themselves on a firmer footing in the communities in which they lived without making any appeal to ideals of legal normalization or political equality, which would have been almost entirely anachronistic until the 1780s.

A focus on the diverse practicalities of Jewish/Christian coexistence, rather than on the political and theological abstractions that only distantly conditioned these interactions, brings this field into alignment with the recent insights of the early modern "new history of toleration." Alexandra Walsham, for England, and Benjamin Kaplan, for the Netherlands and beyond, have stressed the extent and variety of pragmatic practices of inter-confessional accommodation, sharing of space, maintenance of community concord, and even intimacy, in the early modern period.[17] Both these scholars focus almost exclusively on practices of toleration between Christian groups, to which the barriers of incomprehension, power differentials, and ingrained prejudice were, in general, much lower than was the case in relation to Jews. Nonetheless, an emphasis on practice, in place of a fixation on theory, is no less salutary in the Jewish case. However, the idea of the transformation of the status of the Jews of Europe, when this coalesced as a reformist program in the late eighteenth century, carried immense political resonance and charge, and had a huge impact both on the lives of European Jews and on the shape of modern European politics. The challenge to the historian, then, is not to subordinate this history of legal and political change to its antecedents in early modern economic and social pragmatics, and neither to do the opposite. Rather, we must explore the complex connections between the evolving practices of early modern interaction between Jews and Christians, and the

[15] Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830* (Philadelphia, 1979); David Sorkin, "Beyond the East–West Divide: Rethinking the Narrative of the Jews' Political Status in Europe, 1600–1750," *Jewish History* 24 (2010), 247–56.

[16] Jonathan Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce: Economic Thought and Emancipation in Europe, 1638–1848* (Cambridge, 2008), 12–42; Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, 1999), esp. 198–228. See also Dubin's chapter in this volume.

[17] Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006); Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

rethinking of the intellectual basis of that relationship over the course of the long Enlightenment period, and particularly from the 1780s onwards.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION ACROSS CULTURAL BOUNDARIES, *c.* 1550 – *c.* 1750

In many ways, as Jacob Katz argued over five decades ago, the sixteenth century was a period characterized by the reinforcement by Jewish community leaders of the boundaries of separation between the Jewish and the non-Jewish worlds. The intensification of economic contact with non-Jews, particularly through the rise of Jewish peddling, gave rise to new attempts to restrict social contacts, exemplified by the efforts of the Maharal (Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, *c.* 1525–1609) to justify and enforce the ban on consuming gentile wine (*stam yeinam*).[18] This trend was reinforced by the externally imposed ghettoization of many Jewish communities in this period – a practice that, following Pope Paul IV's bull *Cum nimis absurdum* (1555) instituting the ghettos of Rome and Ancona, was imitated in most other Italian centers of Jewish population over the course of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as a characteristic Counter-Reformation policy. However, as Kenneth Stow has argued for Rome and Richard Sennett for Venice, the cultural impact of ghettoization was in a sense paradoxical. Rather than eroding Jewish cultural distinctiveness, it provided, behind the ghetto walls, a secure home for its autonomous development, influenced by the dominant culture while also to some extent sealed from it. This "selective acculturation," as Stow calls it, far from making Jews and Christians invisible to each other, in fact provided the basis for more robust and self-conscious encounters across this boundary of difference.[19] Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin's work on the Counter-Reformation censorship of Jewish texts has, similarly, highlighted the ways in which this process was not simply repressive, but was also a new mode of regulating and sanitizing – and thus, in a sense, facilitating – a two-way engagement between Jewish and non-Jewish culture.[20]

[18] Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Syracuse, NY, 2000 [1958]), 20–3; Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish–Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (Oxford, 1961), 131–42. See also the chapter by Elliott Horowitz in this volume.

[19] Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750*, 3rd edn. (London, 1998), 59–61; Kenneth Stow, *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century* (Seattle, 2001), 67–98; Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilisation* (New York, 1994), 212–54.

[20] Amon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 2007), 198–9.

In the Germanic lands, the tension between economic interaction and cultural suspicion was negotiated not only through spatial segregation but also through the rise, above all in the seventeenth century, of the "Court Jew." The Thirty Years' War (1618–48) had a profound impact on the place of the Jews in central Europe, as they acquired a crucial role as victuallers, provisioners, and financiers to all warring parties. This role became semi-institutionalized in many German courts in the late seventeenth century, where Jewish court factors became established figures in many places. The existence of the Court Jew was often precarious, as exemplified by the fate of Joseph Oppenheimer (Jud Süss), a Court Jew in Württemberg until he fell from favor and was publicly hung outside Stuttgart in 1738. However, the Court Jews also mediated between the Jewish and the non-Jewish worlds in new and multiple ways. They acted as intercessors for their communities, most famously in response to the publication, in 1700, of Johann Andreas Eisenmenger's anti-Jewish compendium, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, whose open distribution the collective efforts of several Court Jews successfully delayed for more than a decade. Their presence as figures of status in the courtly centers of the Holy Roman Empire produced a particular form of Jewish visibility, and required the establishment of practices of politeness and decorum that to some degree accommodated Jewish difference in the circles of the elite.[21]

A certain measure of social integration was also occurring in the seventeenth century in the very different setting of the leading commercial centers of the continent, above all Amsterdam and, in the second half of the century, London. Amsterdam in the late seventeenth century was the thriving hub of international commerce, drawing in a diverse range of outsiders, including, by the end of the century, several thousand Jews, roughly equally divided between the Sephardic and the Ashkenazic communities. The Sephardic elite mingled easily with their Dutch social counterparts, and in the eighteenth century their assimilatory tendencies intensified: the richest members of the community became less willing to serve in communal leadership positions, and increasingly intent on emulating the lifestyle of their non-Jewish neighbors.[22] The same trend can be observed in London, where, by the early eighteenth century, some of the most prosperous Jewish financiers had already to a large extent assimilated

[21] Selma Stern, *The Court Jew* (Philadelphia, 1950); Israel, *European Jewry*, 72–118; Vivian B. Mann and Richard I. Cohen, eds., *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds, 1600–1800: Art, Patronage, Power* (Munich, 1996).

[22] See Jonathan I. Israel, "The Republic of the United Netherlands until about 1750: Demography and Economic Activity," in J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, and I. Schöffer, eds., *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Oxford, 2002), 85–116.

into English polite society. The purchase of country estates was very popular: just like other members of London's newly wealthy commercial class, the richest Jews eagerly bought weekend retreats in Middlesex, Hertfordshire, or Surrey, where they enjoyed rustic pursuits with their neighbors, and inevitably loosened their ties with the organized Jewish community in the East End.[23] The mores of the Sephardic elite were scathingly critiqued by the Ashkenazic doctor Meyer Schomberg, who, in his *Emunat Omen* [The True Faith] (1746) alleged that "these hypocrites maliciously break all ten commandments," and that they shamelessly preferred both to enjoy and to marry non-Jewish women, "rejecting the *kasher* daughters of Israel."[24]

The eighteenth-century Sephardic elite in Amsterdam policed with increasing vigor the social separation of their poorer brethren from Christians of the city, Yosef Kaplan has shown, even as they themselves transgressed those boundaries ever more casually.[25] In the various Sephardic communities of the Caribbean, where the social and economic elites were small, political power was remote, and local hierarchies were further complicated by the existence of mixed-race individuals and communities, the pace of Jewish assimilation was even faster than in the European entrepôts. In the early eighteenth century, the economic dynamism of the Sephardic Atlantic diaspora waned, as the increasing formalization of trade and credit led to what Phillip Curtin has described as "the twilight of the trading diasporas." This accelerated the drift of the Caribbean Sephardic elite toward integration with the dominant culture, and often, ultimately, conversion to Christianity.[26] The rise of a pleasure-oriented, individualistic value system among urban Jews in the eighteenth century was not necessarily linked, then, to the direct influence of Enlightenment ideas, or to a self-conscious process of "secularization."[27] For prosperous Jews, particularly those in mercantile environments, luxury and pleasure figured more prominently because they had money to spend,

[23] Rachel Daiches-Dubens, "Eighteenth Century Anglo-Jewry in and around Richmond, Surrey," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* (*TJHSE*) 18 (1953), 143–68; Vivian D. Lipman, "The Rise of Jewish Suburbia," *TJHSE* 21 (1962), 78–103.

[24] Meyer Schomberg, *Emunat Omen*, trans. Harold Levy, *TJHSE* 20 (1959), 101–11, quotes at 102 and 103.

[25] Yosef Kaplan, "The Threat of Eros in Eighteenth-Century Sephardi Amsterdam," in Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden, 2000), 280–300.

[26] Phillip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge, 1984), 230–54; Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas Within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden, 2002), 567–84.

[27] For a recent contrary view emphasizing this link, see Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, 2011).

and naturally sought to spend it in the same ways as their non-Jewish economic peers. Even while Jews remained very much an outsider group in political terms, the barriers to social integration for the richest Jews in places like Amsterdam, London, and the Caribbean were relatively low, and the temptations of assimilation weren't much restrained by the fairly weak bonds of communal affiliation and loyalty that tied these families to the Jewish poor, or even to each other. Although participation in the broadly "Enlightened" rituals of the mainstream society, in literary and scientific societies, coffee houses, and the like, was central to the cultural reorientation of these Jews, they emulated the dominant culture by and large simply because they were able to do so, without any particular ideological or philosophical motivation.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the social integration of small numbers of wealthy Jews in the most dynamic centers of the Atlantic economy proceeded without much serious attention being given to the question of the appropriate political or social status of Jews as a whole. Certainly, there were wrangles over the regulation of Jewish presence and commerce, but these were legal rather than philosophical arguments. In London, for example, as Jacob Selwood has shown, the "stranger" status of Jews brought benefits as well as disadvantages, and, as for other immigrant groups, their position was largely a function of tussles between the Crown and the more protectionist institutions of the City.[28] The legal disabilities faced by English-born Jews were essentially the same as those faced by other non-Anglicans, and were of little concern to those outside the economic elite: they were barred from political participation and from attendance at universities, but were not subject to any meaningful commercial discrimination other than the cap placed by the City on the number of Jewish brokers at the Royal Exchange. The so-called Jew Bill – passed by the British Parliament in the summer of 1753 and then repealed, in response to public outcry, in November of the same year – sought to enable wealthy foreign-born Jews to become naturalized citizens through the usual, very expensive route of securing a private parliamentary act, but without the usual requirement of taking the sacrament. This was initially seen as uncontroversial, and there is no evidence that the measure was considered, either by its Jewish sponsor, the Sephardic merchant Joseph Salvador, or, at first, by British parliamentarians, as anything more than a pragmatic measure. The protests over the Bill, whipped up by opponents of the Pelham administration that introduced it, overflowed into a lurid rhetorical panic over Jewish domination of the British

[28] Jacob Selwood, *Diversity and Difference in Early Modern London* (Farnham, 2010), 129–58.

nation, with the specter being raised of the Jews taking control of Parliament and the Church, and forcibly circumcising the indigenous male population.[29] This outburst, while clearly drawing on a rich wellspring of anti-Jewish stereotypes in British culture, bore no relation to the content of the Bill itself, and had much more to do with the rhetorical formation of British Protestant national identity – above all, in contrast with French Catholicism – than it did with the Jews themselves. However, this furore heralded a turn, witnessed elsewhere in Europe too around 1750, away from the quiet, unreflective social integration of a very small Jewish elite, and toward more scrutiny and argument over the appropriate place of Jews in the state and in society.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE RISE OF "TOLERATION"

The proper meaning and scope of religious toleration was a key European intellectual concern in the aftermath of the devastating inter-confessional conflicts of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[30] The Jewish case regularly surfaced in the debates on toleration in the early Enlightenment period – but these references can be misleading, as their authors were almost invariably only truly concerned with intra-Christian toleration. John Locke, for example, was rather casually muddled when it came to Jews: in his *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) he expressly endorsed the toleration of Jews (alongside pagans and Muslims), but when challenged on this by Jonas Proast he retreated, in his *Second Letter Concerning Toleration* (1690), to defending the toleration of Jews on the exceptionalist ground that this was the best way to convert them to Christianity.[31] Locke's interest, as he stated at the beginning of his first letter, was focused on "the mutual toleration of Christians in the different professions of religion": Jews came up in his arguments simply as a philosophical limit case.[32] The same applies to the work of Pierre Bayle, the exiled Huguenot who penned the most forceful late seventeenth-century

[29] Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656–2000* (Berkeley, 2002), 73–6; Dana Rabin, "The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility and the Nation," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39 (2006), 157–71.

[30] See Richard Tuck, "Scepticism and Toleration in the Seventeenth Century," in Susan Mendus, ed., *Justifying Toleration* (Cambridge, 1988), 21–35; Ole Peter Grell and Roy Porter, eds., *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2000).

[31] John Locke, *Epistola de tolerantia*, trans. William Popple: *Letter Concerning Toleration* (London, 1689), in John Horton and Susan Mendus, eds., *John Locke – A Letter Concerning Toleration in Focus* (London, 1991), 46; Locke, *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration* (London, 1690), 2.

[32] Locke, *Letter*, 14.9.

argument for religious toleration.[33] Even John Toland's *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland* (1714) – the first pamphlet to make such an explicit call – should be understood, in the context of Toland's wider work as a radical Whig polemicist and provocateur, more as a thought experiment designed to needle his adversaries, the anti-mercantile English "country party."[34]

The most famous eighteenth-century advocate for toleration, Voltaire, was infamously barbed in his repeated denunciations of what he saw as the legalistic primitivism of Judaism and the Jews. Many scholars have struggled to square these two aspects of his thought, with little success. Whatever the reasons for Voltaire's preoccupation with Judaism, though, he clearly saw no contradiction in castigating the Jews even when, sometimes virtually in the same breath, he condemned Christian intolerance toward them.[35] There is no sign that this seemed contradictory to most of his readers, either: for them, too, Jews were an interesting limit case when thinking about toleration, but not seriously within the purview of the concept. It is disingenuous to try to excuse Voltaire's unambiguous and extreme judeophobia – as some scholars have done – by arguing that his true target was theocratic Christianity, for which he saw the Jewish Bible as the foundation.[36] However, he did continually conflate the Jews of the Old Testament with those of all times, citing biblical passages again and again as evidence for their purported "barbarism." He thought of the Jews not as a people within history, but rather as standing outside or even against history, stuck in a non-rational mindset of myth, superstition, and uncritical obedience to arbitrary laws. For Voltaire – and, to a less pronounced extent, for many other Enlightenment thinkers also – Judaism essentially stood as a convenient shorthand for the antithesis of their own positive Enlightenment values. This prevalent Enlightenment tendency of disdain toward Judaism is an important element of the movement's intellectual structures and habits of mind.[37] However, this hostility was based on a consideration of Jews as an abstract and distant category, rather than as a

[33] Pierre Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jésus-Christ, Contrain-les d'entrer* (Amsterdam, 1686).

[34] John Toland, *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1714); Justin Champion, "Toleration and Citizenship in Enlightenment England: John Toland and the Naturalization of the Jews, 1714–1753," in Grell and Porter, *Toleration*, 133–56; Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce*, 43–66.

[35] See, e.g., Voltaire, *Traité sur la Tolérance*, ed. John Renwick (Oxford, 1999 [1763]), 49–68 (chs. 8 and 9).

[36] See, e.g., René Pomeau, *Politique de Voltaire* (Paris, 1963), 48; Peter Gay, *Voltaire's Politics* (Princeton, 1959), 352–4.

[37] Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003), esp. 247–61.

significant part of the social and political mosaic of their own world. These attitudes had to be significantly revised when, starting in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the status of Jews emerged as an issue for serious and concrete discussion.

Voltaire himself never reconsidered his views on the Jews. Only once was he seriously challenged on them – by Isaac de Pinto, financier and economist, would-be *philosophe*, and one of the most prominent members of the semi-assimilated Amsterdam Sephardic elite. Pinto wrote to Voltaire in 1762 objecting to his "calumnies" against his faith. The reply he received was not very satisfactory: beneath a superficial politeness, Voltaire repeated his insistence on the essentially primitive and barbaric nature of Judaism. Pinto did not pursue the matter, and there is no sign that he wavered in his broader admiration for Voltaire and for the Enlightenment as a whole. In his letter to Voltaire, he had, in any case, not sought to persuade Voltaire to abandon his prejudices outright, but merely to accept that they applied only to Ashkenazic Jews, and not to civilized Sephardic Jews like himself. This exchange reveals the extent to which, for both Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals as late as the 1760s, the question of Jewish political rights was almost completely invisible.[38]

Although in Paris at this time Jews still largely figured only as an abstraction, this was no longer the case in Berlin. The reasons for this difference were both demographic and political, and both German and Jewish. Within months of his succession to the Prussian throne in 1740, Frederick II moved to annex Silesia, and the incorporation of this territory into Prussia in 1742 brought large numbers of Jews under his rule. Frederick was eager to productivize his new territories, in good enlightened absolutist fashion – and this placed the Jews and their economic activities inescapably on his agenda. It was in this environment that the young Gotthold Ephraim Lessing embarked on his writing career in Berlin in the late 1740s. Lessing's dramatic presentation of counter-stereotypical, virtuous Jews, first in his early play *Die Juden* (1749) and then in his famous *Nathan der Weise* [Nathan the Wise] (1779), has traditionally been seen in German letters purely as the product of Lessing's precocious personal humanity and liberalism, fostered in his vaunted friendship with Moses Mendelssohn. However, he was, at the start of his career, engaging with a

[38] Isaac da Pinto, *Apologie pour la nation juive* (Amsterdam, 1762); Voltaire to De Pinto, July 21, 1762, in Theodore Besterman, ed., *Voltaire's Correspondence*, vol. XLIX (Oxford, 1959), 131–2; Adam Sutcliffe, "Can a Jew be a philosophe? Isaac de Pinto, Voltaire and Jewish Participation in the European Enlightenment," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (2000), 31–51; Harvey Mitchell, *Voltaire's Jews and Modern Jewish Identity: Rethinking the Enlightenment* (London, 2008).

timely subject. A rethinking of the status of the Jews was, in Berlin in the late 1740s, just beginning to be imaginable. This notion remained, though, very bold and controversial: Lessing did not publish *Die Juden* until 1754, and it was not performed until 1775.[39] The stimulus for this rethinking was not, though, purely driven by the activist governmental concerns of Frederick. Berlin in the 1740s was also emerging as the main center of the early Haskalah movement. Pioneering *maskilim* such as Israel Zamosc and Aaron Solomon Gumpertz were active in the city, engaging with scientific and philosophical issues in a Jewish context while also, in Gumpertz's case, circulating within the intellectual networks of the Berlin Enlightenment. Gumpertz encountered Lessing in this milieu, and was responsible for introducing him to Mendelssohn. Whereas in Paris, as in Amsterdam and London, those Jews who penetrated non-Jewish intellectual circles were highly assimilated, in Gumpertz and Mendelssohn Lessing encountered Jews who were very much engaged in the intellectual uplift of their own cultural tradition. It is not surprising that, particularly given the Prussian political conjuncture at the time, Lessing was fascinated by them.[40]

The Prussian government repeatedly revised the legal apparatus regulating the lives of the Jews in its realm. The first Jewry law issued by Frederick II – the *Revidiertes Generalprivilegium und Reglement* of 1750 – exceeded all previous ones, however, in its length and detail. The law was framed in response to increasing Jewish migration to Berlin from the east, and the economic tensions this was generating in the Prussian capital. The law carefully classified the Jews of Prussia into six classes, only the first two of which were "privileged" with inheritable residence rights. The remaining four groups were "tolerated," each on a differently contingent basis. The law regulated the economic activities and communal structure of the Jews in great detail, and sought particularly to restrict the arrival in Berlin of Jews from Poland. While its legislative precision reflected the interventionist temperament of Frederick, its underlying logic was in complete keeping with the past, with the Jews' protected privileges underwritten by the payment of a fee, due each quarter, for which the Jewish community of each Prussian province was collectively responsible.[41] Recent scholarship has emphasized the economic instrumentalism of this legislation, and the

[39] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Die Juden,* in Lessing, *Werke*, vol. III (Munich, 1970 [1749]); Ritchie Robertson, *The "Jewish Question" in German Literature 1749–1939* (Oxford, 1999), 34–6.

[40] David Sorkin, "The Early Haskala," in Shmuel Feiner and David Sorkin, eds., *New Perspectives on the Haskalah* (London, 2001), 9–26, esp. 17–25.

[41] King Frederick II of Prussia, *Revidiertes Generalprivilegium und Reglement* (1750), in Ismar Freund, *Die Emanzipation der Juden in Preußen*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1912), II, 22–55.

harsh impact on Jewish families of its restriction of the heritability of protected status to first sons only.[42] Nonetheless, a direction of travel toward an at least theoretically less arbitrary legal framework was apparent: already in the previous law, of 1730, the Jews had been made no longer subject to royal decree, but to the firmer footing of state law. This emboldened not only progressive Germans such as Lessing, but also the Berlin *maskilim*. In 1753, an anonymous pamphlet appeared in the city, putting forward, for the first time, the case for equal civil rights for Jews in Germany. It is likely that Gumpertz was the author of the pamphlet, and that Lessing had a hand in its publication.[43]

The first self-consciously reformist Jewry policy did not emerge for another generation, but it was also promulgated by a newly enthroned enlightened absolutist monarch, responding in part to the recent absorption of large numbers of additional Jews into his realms, and aiming to put his own progressive stamp on government, in contrast to the approach of his predecessor and parent. With the first partition of Poland in 1772, Galicia had come under Austrian rule, leading to anxieties that the many poor Jews of that large province would flow westward into Bohemia, Moravia, and Vienna itself. Following the death of his mother, Maria Theresa, in November 1780, Joseph II, already Holy Roman Emperor, became also sole ruler of the Habsburg lands, and immediately sought to implement what he saw as a more enlightened approach to the religious minorities under his rule. Joseph's *Toleranzpatent* of October 1781 extended the right of discreet public worship to all non-Catholic Christians in the Habsburg realms. In a further Edict of Tolerance, promulgated in January 1782 for the Jews of Vienna and Lower Austria, and later extended to the rest of his territories, Joseph accorded this to Jews too, and also granted them freedom to enter any educational institution and to pursue any trade. In exchange, however, the Jews were expected to abandon all their "customary distinctive marks" (clause 24), and to use German rather than Yiddish in their business records (clause 15). The aim of the edict was clearly conveyed in its preamble: "to make the Jewish nation useful and serviceable to the State, mainly through better education

[42] Tobias Schenk, "Die Preussische Weg der Judenemanzipation," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 35 (2008), 449–82, esp. 460–3; Schenk, *Wegbereiter der Emanzipation? Studien zur Judenpolitik des "Aufgeklärten Absolutismus" in Preußen, 1763–1812* (Berlin, 2010), 82–95.

[43] Anon., *Schreiben eines Juden an einen Philosophen nebst der Antwort* (Berlin, 1753); Gad Freudenthal, "Aaron Salomon Gumpertz, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and the First Call for an Improvement of the Civil Rights of Jews in Germany (1753)," *AJS Review* 29 (2005), 299–353.

and Enlightenment of its youth, as well as by directing them to the sciences, the arts and the crafts."[44]

Joseph II's edict exposed to an unprecedented degree the internal divisions within the Jewish world, pushing the reformist *maskilim* and the traditionalist rabbis into immediate and bitter confrontation. The brunt of this polemic was borne by Naphtali Herz Wessely, a prominent maskil originally from Hamburg, who was, in the early 1780s, collaborating with Mendelssohn in Berlin on his *Bi'ur* project to translate the Hebrew Bible into German. A poet and devoted promoter of the dignity of Hebrew, Wessely responded with great enthusiasm to the 1782 edict, which he saw as wondrously in harmony with his key maskilic aspiration to promote secular learning among the Jews. Within weeks of the promulgation of the edict, Wessely published his pamphlet *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* [Words of Peace and Truth], in which he put forward his educational manifesto. This culminated with a passionate pean to Joseph, whom Wessely describes as "a savior to mankind," fervently exhorting his fellow Jews to embrace his reforms and to labor to meet his expectations of rapid educational and linguistic progress.[45] Wessely's pamphlet was very swiftly and bitterly condemned by several prominent rabbis, most notably the extremely authoritative Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague. The "Wessely affair" thrust into the open the tensions between Mendelssohn's circle and the rabbinic establishment, which had been simmering for some time. The Haskalah movement was pushed toward greater radicalism, in embattled opposition to the rabbinic mainstream, while in centers such as Berlin the position of moderate reformers – such as Wessely – became increasingly untenable.[46] These intra-Jewish conflicts of the 1780s were further complicated by wider debates and intellectual developments in the non-Jewish world, before, at the end of the decade, being engulfed by the revolutionary moment.

The other main focus of upheaval in the Jewish world at this time was in Alsace, where over 20,000 Jews made their living from small-scale trading

[44] Emperor Joseph II, *Toleranzedikt,* January 2, 1982, in Alfred Pribram*, Urkunden und Akten zur Geschichte der Juden in Wien* (Vienna, 1918), II, 494–500, English trans. in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2nd edn. (New York, 1995), 36–40.

[45] Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (Berlin, 1782), English translation in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *Jew in the Modern World*, 70–4.

[46] Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2004), 139–62; Edward Breuer, "Naphtali Herz Wessely and the Cultural Dislocations of an Eighteenth-Century Maskil," in Feiner and Sorkin, eds., *New Perspectives*, 27–47; Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah: Studies in Hebrew Literature of the Enlightenment in Germany* (Leiden, 1979), 113–30.

and rural moneylending. In 1777 and 1778, thousands of debtors in Alsace refused to continue their repayments to Jewish moneylenders, producing payment receipts rejected as forgeries by both the moneylenders and the highest court of Alsace. The likely forger and instigator of this "affair of the false receipts" was François Hell, an Alsatian bailiff who, in an inflammatory pamphlet published in the midst of the affair, cast Jews as an alien "nation in the nation," inimical both to Christian morality and to national community.[47] Seeking to protect their community from this wave of anti-Jewish sentiment, its leaders turned to Moses Mendelssohn, who in the 1770s had interceded on behalf of several Jewish communities across Germany and beyond. In this case, however, Mendelssohn passed on the request to Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, a Prussian diplomat and scholar, seeking to engage a prominent Christian voice as an advocate for the Jews. This collaboration resulted in the publication of Dohm's *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* [On the Civic Improvement of the Jews] in the summer of 1781, a few months before the promulgation of Joseph II's first *Toleranzpatent*. This text, the first extended and prominent European argument in favor of Jewish civil rights, emerged as a result of Mendelssohn's interactions in the circles of the Berlin Enlightenment, at a moment when the political status of Jews was suddenly becoming seen as ripe for change.[48]

Dohm shared the consensus view among educated Germans that the Jews of his own day were, apart from a few honorable exceptions such as Mendelssohn, a physically, culturally, and morally impoverished people. In his treatise, he repeatedly describes the Jews as dishonest, hostile to others, and theologically mired in legalistic pettiness.[49] However, he argued that this was not their natural state: they had, rather, degenerated as a result of the discriminatory and hostile treatment they had suffered for centuries at the hands of Christians. Once embraced by the broader political society, Dohm insisted, the Jews would rapidly regenerate themselves. Their interests would before too long align with those of the states in which they lived, and they would return to the spirit of their noble "ancient Mosaic constitution," suitably altered to fit "changed times and circumstances."[50] Dohm had read widely on the history of the Jews, and was

[47] Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815* (Berkeley, 2003), 67–73.

[48] Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Tuscaloosa, 1973), 450–4; Shmuel Feiner, *Moses Mendelssohn: Sage of Modernity* (New Haven, 2010), 135–7.

[49] Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1781–3; repr. Hildesheim, 1973), I, 18–24, 105–9, 143.

[50] Ibid., 144.

particularly interested in the ways in which their persecution had deformed their original moral "spirit." Moreover, as an intellectually restless government servant, the Jews served for him as a perfect test case for the reformist capacities of benevolent government.[51] Unlike Joseph II, he unequivocally placed legal equality at the head of his summary list of the nine steps necessary to transform the Jews, stating that they must be given "absolutely equal rights with all other subjects."[52]

Dohm's treatise stimulated a wide debate, in response to which, in 1783, he published an extended second edition of this text, in which he included some of the most prominent counterblasts against it, and his own responses to them. Most significant among these was the essay by Johann David Michaelis, Professor of Oriental Studies at Göttingen and the leading Hebraist of late eighteenth-century Germany. Michaelis regarded the Hebrew texts he studied as reflective of the true and unchanging essence of Judaism. He had, indeed, been the key intellectual sponsor behind Carl Niebuhr's ethnographic expedition to the Near East in the 1760s, arguing that a better understanding of the contemporary nomads of Arabia would help to elucidate the Bible much more than the observation of contemporary European Jews, whose habits had been distorted by repeated waves of alien influences.[53] Against Dohm's argument that an extension of civic rights to Jews would lead to their integration, Michaelis insisted that this goal was unattainable, because the very purpose of the Mosaic law was to preserve the Jews as a separate people. In making his case for Jewish immutability, Michaelis melded biblical, cultural, and biological arguments, all of which, in his view, were aspects of a single, holistic Jewish nature. His most emphatic rejection of Jewish Emancipation was on military grounds: the Jews could never serve modern states as loyal and emphatic fighters, he claimed, because their religion forbade them from eating with other soldiers and from fighting on the Sabbath, and because they were in any case too short.[54]

Dohm's progressive reformism would seem at first sight to have little in common with Michaelis's biblicist fundamentalism with regard to the appropriate political status of Jews. Michaelis was, however, a serious scholar, at the fore of Enlightenment debates on the nature and origin of language, in the context of which he revised his early view that Hebrew was

[51] See Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce*, 94–134, esp. 116–17; Robert Liberles, "Dohm's Treatise on the Jews: A Defence of the Enlightenment," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 33 (1988) 29–42; Jonathan M. Hess, *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven, CN, 2002), 25–49.

[52] Dohm, *Verbesserung*, I, 110.

[53] Hess, *Claims of Modernity*, 69–79.

[54] Johann David Michaelis, *Herr Ritter Michaelis Beurtheilung* [1782], in Dohm, *Verbesserung*, II, 31–71, esp. 41–51.

an immutable language, and instead incorporated it into his overarching and influential theory of linguistic evolution.[55] Dohm's view of the Jews' potential was also to a significant extent shaped by the Bible. His respectful evocation of the biblical Mosaic constitution loosely links him to a long tradition of European civic republican idealization of this polity as a model of constitutional simplicity and purity.[56] He cites and praises Michaelis on a number of occasions, and the two men clearly saw themselves as members of a shared intellectual community. The importance of the Bible was indisputable for both of them, and they both grappled with the relationship of this ancient text to their changing sense of the historicity of their own time and of the possible envisioning of different futures.

Imagining different futures also posed challenges from a Jewish perspective. A particularly awkward issue for Moses Mendelssohn was the authority of rabbis to expel individuals from the community (the *ḥerem*). At the end of the 1770s, the announcement of Mendelssohn's collaborative project to translate the Torah into German had met with rabbinical threats of expulsion. Then, in 1781, the excommunication of Netanel Posner, a semi-assimilated member of the Hamburg Jewish community, was brought to the attention of the wider non-Jewish public and the ruling Danish authorities by August Cranz, an eager admirer of Mendelssohn and a strong proponent of religious toleration.[57] The embarrassment of this affair was compounded in the following year when the same threat was issued to Wessely following the publication of his *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet*. It was around this time that Mendelssohn decided to declare himself opposed to the rabbinical ban, doing so in print in the preface to his German translation of Menasseh ben Israel's *Vindiciae judaeorum* (1782), and taking issue with Dohm's endorsement of this religious sanction.[58] Soon after this, though, Cranz, in his anonymous open letter *Das Forschen nach Licht und Recht* [The Search for Light and Right] (1782), issued Mendelssohn with his most probing intellectual challenge yet. Was this not the moment, Cranz asked, for Mendelssohn to take these arguments a further step, by rejecting rabbinical authority unambiguously; and, once having crossed this threshold, would he not have undermined

[55] Avi Lifschitz, *Language and Enlightenment: The Berlin Debates of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2012), 114–17.

[56] See Karp, *Politics of Jewish Commerce*, 43–66; Lea Campos Boralevi, "Classical Foundation Myths of European Republicanism: The Jewish Commonwealth," in Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2002), II, 247–61.

[57] Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 135–8.

[58] Dohm, *Verbesserung*, I, 124. See also Altmann, *Mendelssohn*, 455–7.

Judaism so fundamentally as to have brought himself to the threshold of Christianity?[59]

It was in response to Cranz that Mendelssohn wrote his most famous work, *Jerusalem* (1783). This key text of the Jewish Enlightenment, then, emerged not as part of an internal and autonomous process of maskilic reflection and redefinition, but was, rather, the product of the awkward dissonances that emerged in the course of Mendelssohn's two-way mediation between Jewish and German spheres. Mendelssohn's preferred approach was one of pragmatism, patching up his personal relationships and intellectual positions in each sphere rather than aspiring to produce an overarching public reconciliation of the two. The Wessely affair, however, brought to the fore the tension between the maskilic demand for tolerance and the institution of communal rabbinic authority. Once Cranz and others had thrust this issue into public debate, Mendelsssohn felt he had no choice but to address it systematically.[60] In the early 1780s, then, multiple currents of thought and debate were quite suddenly intertwined in a complex reconsideration, with respect to the Jews of Europe, of the proper relationships between religious and secular authority, community autonomy and state law, and tradition and change. For no party were the answers on offer as clear-cut as they superficially appeared.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND ITS AFTERMATH

In France, also, the 1780s was a decade of intensifying discussion of the Jews as a social and political problem. While the "false receipts" affair of the late 1770s reflected the high level of tension in Alsace between the peasantry and the rural, traditional Jewish community, in Metz, the main Jewish urban center in eastern France, the need for the reform of both the Jews' economic activities and their political status was articulated in two early essays, by the barrister Pierre-Louis Lacretelle (1776) and, in more hostile terms, the army officer Philippe-François de Latour-Foissac (1786).[61] In response to rising interest in this question, and in particular to the publication, in 1782, of a French translation of Dohm's text (under the title *De la Réforme politique des Juifs* [On the Political Reform of the Jews]), the Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts in Metz announced in 1785 an essay competition, on the question

[59] August Friedrich Cranz, *Das Forschen nach Licht und Recht, in einem Schreiben an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn auf Veranlassung seiner merkwürdigen Vorrede zu Menasse Ben Israel* (Berlin, 1782).

[60] See Kenneth Hart Green, "Moses Mendelssohn's Opposition to the *Herem*: The First Step Toward Denominationalism?" *Modern Judaism* 12 (1992), 39–60.

[61] Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 73–82.

"Are There Ways of Making the Jews More Useful and Happier in France?" In 1788, the Academy finally declared three joint winners: Zalkind Hourwitz, a Polish-born Jew resident in Paris; a barrister from Lorraine, Claude-Antoine Thiéry; and, most influentially, the abbé Henri Grégoire, for his *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale, et politique des Juifs* [Essay on the Physical, Moral, and Political Regeneration of the Jews].[62] In many ways, Grégoire's arguments were similar to those of Dohm: so much so, indeed, that he argued strenuously at the opening of his essay entry that he had developed his arguments independently of both Dohm and Joseph II's edict.[63] Grégoire expressed his admiration for Jewish family life and charitable institutions, and for their respect for elders and education. However, he also regarded them as generally dirty, economically rapacious, and culturally, sexually, and physically degenerate. The total regeneration he envisaged had at its core a moral reawakening that was strongly tinged with Christian conversionist millenarianism. He endorsed strong measures of surveillance and control until that regeneration had been achieved – including a prohibition on Jewish moneylending.[64]

The unanticipated eruption of the French Revolution almost immediately injected a new sense of transformatory possibility into this debate. Both Grégoire and François Hell were elected to the Estates General that convoked in Versailles in May 1789, and, when this body transformed itself into the National Assembly, were outspoken in advancing their overlapping arguments on the appropriate policy toward the Jews of France. The presence of these individuals, however, is not enough to explain the extraordinary degree of attention given by the Assembly to the status of Jews. According to Ronald Schechter, this was discussed at no fewer than twenty-five Assembly sessions during the first year of the body's existence, several of them lengthy and notably passionate.[65] The Jews accounted for approximately 0.2 percent of the French population, and only a small proportion of them met the wealth qualification for the "active citizenship" to which all Jews were finally deemed eligible by the decree of September 27, 1791.[66]

[62] All three winning entries are reprinted in *La Révolution française et l'émancipation des juifs*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1968). See also David Feuerwerker, *L'Émancipation des juifs en France* (Paris, 1976), 49–142.

[63] Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 2005), 65.

[64] Abbé Henri Grégoire, *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale, et politique des Juifs* [Paris, 1789], in *La Révolution française*, III, 95–9. See also Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 87–95; Sepinwall, *Grégoire*, 56–80.

[65] Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 154.

[66] Achille-Edmond Halphen, ed., *Receuil des lois: décrets, ordonnances, avis du conseil d'état, arrêtés et règlements concernant les Israélites depuis la revolution de 1789* (Paris, 1851), 9–10.

Why, then, was this considered such a pressing and controversial issue? Clearly, the Jews represented an important limit case for the expansiveness of French citizenship, and its requirements of similarity, morality, and transparency.[67] However, more straightforwardly traditional concerns also played an important role. Economic suspicion of Jews, particularly in eastern France, was a powerful factor motivating some to keep this minority outside the national community, while the millenarian resonance of the conversion of the Jews carried renewed appeal, hovering ambiguously between the religious and the secular, for others.

The extension of equal rights to Jews was exported across much of western Europe by the invading armies of the Directory and Napoleonic periods. In the Dutch Batavian Republic in September 1796, the Rhineland in 1797, most of Italy in 1797–8, and elsewhere, the liberation of Jewish communities from long-standing restrictions became a hallmark of the French introduction of Revolution-inspired change. The reception and impact of these reforms varied greatly, however. In the Batavian Republic, proposals to recognize Jews as full Dutch citizens were debated carefully, and were resisted by federalists wary of centralization, and by Jewish community leaders who did not wish to lose their autonomy, before eventually being passed unanimously.[68] In Italy, the Jews welcomed the French armies with great enthusiasm, rejoicing in being liberated from the requirement in most cities to live in ghettos. The impact of these new freedoms on the Jews of Italy, and in Piedmont especially, was exceptional. Particularly well placed, because of the small size of the Italian bourgeois class, to prosper from the new economic, real estate, and employment possibilities available to them during the Napoleonic period, following the imposition of the *status quo ante* after 1815 they returned to their ghettos a transformed community, drawn more than any other group to the nationalist and reformist ideals of the *Carbonari* and others.[69]

Napoleon's approach to the Jews, however, became over time increasingly pragmatic, his interest in their regeneration focused more narrowly on securing their political loyalty and promoting their economic productivization. Although the Jewish leadership in France eagerly embraced the modernizing rhetoric of the times, progress toward these goals was notably slow. This was particularly the case in Alsace, where the rural and

[67] Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 150–93; Gary Kates, "Jews into Frenchmen: Nationality and Representation in Revolutionary France," in Ferenc Fehér, ed., *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity* (Berkeley, 1990), 103–16.

[68] Hans Daalder, "Dutch Jews in a Segmented Society," in Katznelson and Birnbaum, eds., *Paths of Emancipation*, 37–58, esp. 42–5.

[69] Dan V. Segre, "The Emancipation of the Jews of Italy," in Katznelson and Birnbaum, eds., *Paths of Emancipation*, 222–4, esp. 206–7.

traditional nature of both the Jewish and the non-Jewish population, the enduring hostility toward Jews of the local peasantry, and the profound economic dislocation wrought by the Revolution itself all contributed to the retrenchment of long-standing economic and cultural habits.[70] These problems came to the fore in 1806, when complaints about Jewish moneylending were brought to Napoleon's attention when he was passing through Strasbourg. In response, later that year, in Paris, Napoleon convoked an "Assembly of Jewish Notables," charged with answering a battery of questions concerning whether the Jews were or were not both willing and able to integrate into the French nation as patriotic and loyal citizens.

The members of the Assembly did their best to supply the Emperor with the answers that it was clear he wanted, and in order to seal the authority of these pronouncements Napoleon had them ratified by a "Great Sanhedrin," convened by him on the ancient model.[71] In this gesture, we see perhaps the most vivid example of the fractured historical consciousness that so frequently characterized attitudes to Judaism in this era. Napoleon's summoning of the Parisian Sanhedrin signaled the belief that the true essence of Judaism remained in its ancient past. However, this was also an act of unprecedented theological intervention, with Napoleon casting himself as the key transformative force blasting the Jewish people into the modern era. The high political theatre of the Sanhedrin flattered the Emperor as a latter-day Moses – but it also flattered the Jews, who uniquely were able to bestow this status on their ruler.[72] The exceptional status of the Jews thus endured, despite the ostensible goal of the regeneration program being their normalization. Three decrees issued by Napoleon in March 1808 entrenched this paradox, legally establishing the role of the state in refashioning its Jewish subjects. The first two dealt with organizational matters, imposing on French Jewry a consistorial structure modeled on the one created for French Protestants in 1802, but charged with particular responsibilities of surveillance and civic education. The third – the so-called Infamous Decree – imposed many discriminatory regulations on Ashkenazic Jewish moneylending, retroactively deeming many loans invalid, restricting the freedom of movement of Alsatian Jews, and banning any new Jewish settlement in Alsace. Although these exceptional measures

[70] Jay R. Berkovitz, "The French Revolution and the Jews: Assessing the Cultural Impact," *AJS Review* 20 (1995), 25–86, esp. 50–3.

[71] Diogène Tama, *Collection des Actes de l'Assemblée des Israélites de France et du royaume d'Italie* (Paris, 1807); *Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrim . . . Translated from the Original Published by M. D. Tama, with a Preface and Notes by F. D. Kirwan* (London, 1807); Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews and the Sanhedrin* (London, 1979).

[72] Pierre Birnbaum, *L'Aigle et la synagogue: Napoléon, les juifs et l'État* (Paris, 2007); Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 226–35.

were not renewed when the decree expired in 1818, this suspension of legal equality underscored Napoleon's willingness to subordinate political principles to pragmatic exigencies.[73] The case of Alsace, though, highlights not only the fragility of promises of civil equality, but also their limited practical significance in the absence of meaningful cultural and economic change. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that there was any significant movement of Alsatian Jews from their traditional village residences to the cities, or from their niche as moneylenders and petty traders to different forms of economic activity.[74]

Although there was some consideration of reforms in the status of Jews in parts of Germany in the decade preceding the French Revolution, formal change was not enacted until it was exported from France. On the left bank of the Rhine, in 1798, and the Hanseatic cities of the Northwest and their hinterland following their annexation in 1810, local Jews achieved civil equality through the local application of French law. The practical significance of this, however, varied greatly. In the city of Cologne, where Jews had not been permitted to reside since 1424, 1798 marked the beginning of the development of a Jewish community in this trading hub, which, after a slow start (only about 200 Jews lived in Cologne in 1815), became by the middle of the nineteenth century a significant center of Jewish settlement. In Hamburg, by contrast, Sephardic merchant families were long established, and had gained various concessions during the eighteenth century thanks to the city's need to engage in "competitive toleration" with the neighboring Danish port of Altona.[75] In other German states established or reshaped by Napoleon, fresh legislation was passed: in the Kingdom of Westphalia, ruled by Napoleon's brother Jérôme, Jews were granted full civic equality in 1808, and similar though less comprehensive edicts were passed around the same time by the Grand Duchy of Baden. After Napoleon's military triumphs in 1806, the trend everywhere in Germany was toward reform. In some places, though, this was severely limited – as in Bavaria, where an 1813 edict aimed at Jewish "civic improvement" introduced a new registration system designed to restrict the size of the Jewish community – or grudging, as in Frankfurt

[73] Jay R. Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France* (Philadelphia, 2004), 136–43; Phyllis Cohen Albert, *The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Hanover, NH, 1977), 50–61.

[74] Paula E. Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1991), 30–49.

[75] Shulamit Magnus, *Jewish Emancipation in a German City: Cologne, 1798–1871* (Stanford, 1997), 27–45; Joachim Whaley, *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg, 1529–1819* (Cambridge, 2002), 70–110.

where a high collective payment from the Jewish community was demanded in return for their 1811 receipt of civic equality.[76]

Developments in Berlin, and the role of French influence there, followed a distinctive path. The rise to great wealth of the city's Jewish financial elite during the Seven Years' War (1756–63), and the impact of the Haskalah under its sponsorship, enabled the emergence by the end of the 1770s of a particularly fluid social environment at the top end of Berlin's social and economic spectrum, in which the richest Jews were increasingly lax in their religious observance, and where, starting in 1780, salons hosted by a handful of Jewish women provided a new milieu for Christians and Jews to interact socially, intellectually, and on occasion also romantically.[77] In this environment, the question of the Jews' legal status was never far from the surface. Shortly after Frederick William II's accession to the Prussian throne in 1786, the Jews of Berlin succeeded in persuading the government to establish a commission on this subject, but its limited proposals were rejected by the community. In 1799, David Friedländer, the leading figure in the community, provocatively proposed in an open letter to the leading Lutheran cleric in the city that the Jews be offered a "dry baptism," abandoning the rituals of Judaism and converting to Lutheranism, but with an exemption from its dogmatic and ritual aspects. Friedländer's deistic proposal would have been unimaginable before the French Revolution – but it also reflected the local restlessness of Berlin Jewish elite, as he put it, "to throw off the shackles of ceremonial law [and] to incorporate themselves into the great civil society." Although rejected by all, it nonetheless stimulated significant debate.[78] The occupation of Berlin by French troops from 1806 to 1808 changed the mood in the city: the era of the Jewish salons came to an abrupt end, and the rise of German nationalist sentiments to some extent contributed to anti-Jewish

[76] Rürup, "Thorny Path," 10–15; Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, "Legal Status and Emancipation," in Michael A. Meyer, ed., *German-Jewish History in Modern Times,* vol. II: *Emancipation and Acculturation, 1780–1871* (New York, 1997), 7–49; Christopher Clark, "German Jews," in Rainer Liedtke and Stephan Wendehorst, eds., *The Emancipation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants: Minorities and the Nation State in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Manchester, 1999), 122–47, esp. 124–6.

[77] Steven M. Lowenstein, "Jewish Upper Crust and Berlin Jewish Enlightenment: The Family of Daniel Itzig," in Frances Malino and David Sorkin, eds., *Profiles in Diversity: Jews in a Changing Europe 1750–1850* (Detroit, 1988), 182–201; Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family and Crisis* (Oxford, 1994), 25–67; Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven, 1988).

[78] David Friedländer, "Sendschreiben an . . . Probst Teller" (Berlin, 1799), English translation (with the most important responses) in Richard Crouter and Julie Klassen, eds. and trans., *A Debate on Jewish Emancipation and Christian Theology in Old Berlin* (Indianapolis, 2004), 77.

feelings. However, reformist voices moved to the fore of the Prussian state as it recovered from the humiliation of the Napoleonic defeat. Most notable among these was Karl August von Hardenberg, who, as State Chancellor from 1810, was the main architect of the sweeping edict of March 1812 that finally reformed the legal status of Jews. Although restrictions were provisionally maintained on Jews holding offices in state government (clause 9), this landmark law otherwise conferred civil equality on the established Jewish residents of Prussia, while also obliging them to adopt fixed surnames and to use German in their commercial and official transactions.[79]

In Poland, also, the civil status of the Jews emerged as a focus of consideration from the early 1780s, influenced by developments to the west, and also figuring within broader discussions of how to reform the feudal Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. An anonymous pamphlet appeared in Warsaw in 1785, titled "The Jews, or the Urgent Necessity of a Reform amongst the Jews in the Lands of the Republic," calling, in a Dohmian spirit, for Jews to be accorded citizenship and for "the abolition of all differences" between them and Christians.[80] The debates stimulated by the pamphlet were continued at the Four-Year Sejm (1788–92), the last-ditch attempt to overhaul the Commonwealth, where, as at the broadly simultaneous Assembly in Paris, some reformists argued strongly for the transformation of the Jews into legally equal and economically "useful" citizens. Also as in Paris, Jewish intellectuals engaged with these debates. Particularly notable was the pamphlet published anonymously, and in French, by Mendel Lefin, a maskil from Sanatow who had spent the early 1780s in Mendelssohn's circle in Berlin, and who in his intervention attempted, through an apparently non-Jewish voice ventriloquizing authoritative Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, to persuade the Sejm's Committee on Jewish Affairs to maintain the autonomy of Jewish community structures (the *kahal*).[81] These debates ultimately came to

[79] The text of this edict is reprinted in Freund, *Emanzipation*, II, 455–9. See also Rürup, "Thorny Path," 14–15; Jersch-Wenzel, "Legal Status," 24–7.

[80] Anon, *Żydzi, czyli koniecna potrzeba reformowania Żydow w kryach Rzeczypospolitej Polsiej* (Warsaw, 1786), in *Materialy do Dziejow Sejmu Czteroletniego* [Materials on the History of the Four-Year Sejm] (henceforth *MDSC*), 6 vols. (Wrocław, 1955–69), VI, 78–93; Artur Eisenbach, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Poland, 1780–1870* (Oxford, 1991), 62–7.

[81] Anon. [Mendel Lefin], *Essai d'un plan de réforme ayant pour objet d'éclairer la Nation Juive en Pologne et de redresser par là ses moeurs* (Warsaw, 1791), in *MDSC*, VI, 409–21; Nancy Sinkoff, "Strategy and Ruse in the Haskalah of Mendel Lefin of Sanatow," in Feiner and Sorkin, eds., *New Perspectives*, 86–102, esp. 97–101; Sinkoff, *Out of the Shtetl: Making Jews Modern in the Polish Borderlands* (Providence, RI, 2004), 84–95.

nothing: the Sejm did not pass any reforms relating to the situation of the Jews, and the constitution it did adopt in 1791 was annulled with the second partitioning of Poland in 1793.[82] However, in this Jewish demographic heartland no less than in western Europe, the intellectual ferment of the 1780s and, even more so, the early 1790s wove the issue of the status of the Jews tightly into the wider rethinking of the nature of the European state. In the short-lived Duchy of Warsaw, established by Napoleon in 1807, Jews enjoyed equality for just over a year, until their political rights were revoked in the autumn of 1808, a few months after Napoleon's "Infamous Decree." The reformist aspirations of the Polish Jewish intelligentsia remained, however, in the Duchy and in the Congress Kingdom that succeeded it in 1815, closely identified with the liberal intellectual lineage to which much of the state apparatus continued to subscribe. It is not possible, as Marcin Wodzinski has argued, to dismiss the Jewish reformist progressives of early nineteenth-century Poland as self-interested non-maskilic "assimilationists." Poland's relatively liberal state and social institutions (notably Freemasonry), and the Polish language itself, were the natural channels through which this cluster of individuals sought to advance their classically maskilic agenda of Jewish educational uplift and cultural, economic, and political integration.[83]

The need for a policy toward Jews in Russia arose as a result of the country's inheritance of a large proportion of Poland's Jews in the three partitions of 1772, 1793, and 1795. A somewhat confused approach was pursued under Catherine the Great, who sought to integrate the Jews (and other minorities) into Russia's estate categories and legal structures, while maintaining the long-standing policy excluding them from the Russian interior. A decree of December 1791 first identified the band of western and southern provinces that became known as the "Pale of Settlement," to which Jewish residence rights were restricted. Only in the subsequent reign of Paul I (1796–1801) were sustained efforts made to inquire into the condition of the Jews of Russia, and to formulate bespoke policies for their integration and productivization. Paul's heir Alexander I swiftly moved, against a background of increasing tension and confusion over the electoral rights of Jews in Russian towns, to establish a committee to reform the organization of Russian Jewry, the outcome of which was the ambitious Statute of 1804. A reformist, Enlightenment spirit suffused the rhetoric of this legislation: the first ten clauses focused on education

[82] See Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2006), 211–31.

[83] Marcin Wodzinski, "Good Maskilim and Bad Assimilationists, or Toward a New Historiography of the Haskalah in Poland," *Jewish Social Studies* 10 (2004), 87–122.

(requiring the teaching and public use of Polish, Russian, or German), while later sections set out the integration of Jews into the occupational classes of the Empire, particularly seeking to promote their adoption of farming. However, in contrast with the policies adopted to the west, the *kahal* structure was left essentially unaltered.[84] The educational and agrarian aspirations of the Edict were unrealistic, and this, combined with the maintenance of the traditional structures of Jewish self-government, ensured that the practical impact of the Edict was very limited indeed. Nonetheless, the objectives and principles guiding both Alexander's and Napoleon's approach to the Jews in their empires were broadly similar, drawing their inspiration from the same debates over the preceding two decades.

CONCLUSION – RETHINKING EMANCIPATION

Viewed with hindsight, the revolutionary era might readily seem to have been a false dawn in the history of the extension of equal civil rights to Jews. Although the issue was discussed quite extensively at the Congress of Vienna, with several prominent delegates supportive of the principle of Jewish civil equality, it was finally agreed, in the constitution of the German Federation adopted in June 1815, that only the rights of Jews granted by the German states – and not those bestowed by Napoleonic administrations – would be safeguarded.[85] The following decade was one of setback, with a wave of anti-Jewish violence, the Hep-Hep riots, spreading from Bavaria to many other parts of Germany in 1819, and the restorationist mood from Paris to St. Petersburg markedly more hostile to religious and cultural pluralism. This historical disappointment, repeated in the aftermath of 1848, has led to the developments from Dohm to the Congress of Vienna being widely viewed as the prelude to a later nineteenth-century drama, rather than as a historically significant chapter of European intellectual, political, and Jewish history, with important early modern roots as well as later ramifications. Seeking to understand the revolutionary period in its own terms enables us to recognize the reformist optimism that was shared by many Jews and non-Jews across Europe between 1780 and 1815. A wider view also frees us from an overly narrow and teleological focus on legal reforms, of which until the late nineteenth

[84] John Doyle Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the "Jewish Question" in Russia, 1772–1825* (DeKalb, IL, 1986), 53–143.

[85] Salo Baron, *Die Judenfrage auf dem Wiener Kongreß* (Vienna, 1920), 146–77; Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 166–92.

century only a minority of affluent male Jews could be beneficiaries. For the early nineteenth-century German Jewish "ideologues of emancipation," such as David Fränkel and Joseph Wolf, emancipation was, as David Sorkin has influentially argued, fundamentally predicated on a *quid pro quo* of cultural and educational regeneration for political and civil rights.[86] However, some important dynamics of social and economic interaction between Jews and non-Jews in this period, and of the theological assumptions that continued significantly to condition them, were not captured within this ascendant vision of transformational reciprocity.

Setting the roots of Jewish Emancipation within an early modern context, it becomes apparent that a relatively straightforward social drift of the most prosperous Jews toward increased social integration into non-Jewish society played a very important role, particularly in Amsterdam, London, and elsewhere around the Atlantic from the late seventeenth century onward. In these places, processes of cultural integration progressed in advance of ideological or legal changes: in Britain, for example, although professing Jews were not officially able to vote until 1835, there is clear evidence that in some places they managed to do so before that date.[87] Rethinking of the place of the Jews in European society, when it occurred, was almost invariably to some extent colored by the biblical associations to which the Jews remained very tightly bound throughout the long Enlightenment, from Locke's writings on toleration to Napoleon's summoning of his Sanhedrin. Economic considerations also figured prominently in pushing Jewish issues onto the policy agenda, and this in turn had an impact on cultural output: Lessing's adoption of the theme of the toleration of Jews is a good example of this. Lessing's interaction with Moses Mendelssohn, though, also underscores the fact that the broad processes of the transformation of the status of European Jewry involved Jews themselves as active participants. Emancipation was not something that simply happened to Jews, and nor was it by any means viewed by Jews in a unified or straightforward way. The sudden acceleration of discussions and reforms at the start of the 1780s was due, above all, to the intertwinement of the reformist energies of the Berlin Haskalah with those of state-sponsored Enlightenment. Both before then and after, though, the social and political place of Jews was established most fundamentally in their lived encounters with their non-Jewish neighbors.

[86] David Sorkin, "The Genesis of the Ideology of Emancipation," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 32 (1987), 11–40, esp. 21–4.

[87] Geoffrey Alderman, "English Jews or Jews of the English Persuasion? Reflections on the Emancipation of Anglo-Jewry," in Katznelson and Birnbaum, eds., *Paths of Emancipation*, 128–56, esp. 128.

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CHAPTER 41

LOOKING BACKWARD AND FORWARD
Rethinking Jewish Modernity in the Light of Early Modernity

DAVID B. RUDERMAN

THE CHALLENGES OF WRITING A HISTORY OF EARLY MODERN JEWRY

Given its composite nature, *The Cambridge History of Early Modern Judaism* cannot easily stake out a single authoritative position on what early modern Jewish culture and society means in its totality. Taking as a whole the variegated perspectives presented elsewhere in this volume, and despite the strong hands of the editors in organizing a coherent exposition of the period, it is virtually impossible to expect one unified viewpoint to emerge. Without some notion of what the whole represents, however, one is hard pressed to suggest in what ways this epoch is continuous or discontinuous with the period that follows it – that is, the modern period itself.

As a mere contributor to this large collection of essays, and having published a book that purports to offer a broad interpretation of the entire period,[1] I would like to venture beyond the particular portraits offered by my distinguished colleagues and suggest how I would map this entire period. With this blueprint in mind, I might then be in a better position to offer some additional reflections on the meaning of modernity in the light of early modernity. But first, it might be useful to suggest why there have been so few attempts in the past to offer an overarching synthetic interpretation of the early modern period that transcends the particular narratives of specific regions, personalities, or themes.

The reluctance to offer a comprehensive, transregional portrait of Jewish culture and society in early modern Europe is attributable, I have argued,

[1] David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, 2010). While I have drawn heavily from parts of this book in writing this chapter, some of my formulations here represent a further stage of my thinking, stimulated in part by the numerous reactions to the book during the past several years.

to at least three major challenges which have inhibited others from attempting to do seriously what only one historian has previously attempted. I refer to Jonathan Israel who first offered a comprehensive portrait of the entire period, arguing for the first time that early modern Jewish history needed to be understood as a distinct epoch, distinguishable from both the medieval and modern periods.[2]

Prior to the appearance of Israel's book, historians of the Jewish experience, such as Heinrich Graetz, Simon Dubnov, Jacob Katz, Shmuel Ettinger, and Ben-Zion Dinur, had focused almost exclusively on the periodization of the modern period. Graetz even considered the so-called dark ages for Jews to be not the European Middle Ages – which he viewed more positively, along with other nineteenth-century historians – but the period immediately preceding the emancipatory era – that is, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. This position was first challenged by Salo W. Baron in a classic essay as early as 1928. While Jacob Katz focused primarily on the period now conventionally called "the early modern," he never utilized the term, nor did he display any awareness of an early modern era genuinely distinct from the Middle Ages.[3]

For Baron, and later Gershom Scholem and Yosef H. Yerushalmi, certain "modern" developments could actually be located in European Jewish societies long before the Enlightenment and Emancipation. Baron located modernist tendencies among the Italian and Dutch Jewish communities adumbrating – but long preceding – those of German Jewry in the era of Mendelssohn and the Berlin Haskalah. Scholem saw an incipient modernity in the challenge to normative Judaism posed by the Sabbatean movement, while Yerushalmi labeled *conversos* returning to the Jewish fold in the seventeenth century as the first modern Jews.[4] But Jonathan Israel

[2] Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (Oxford, 1985). The book was revised in 1989, and then revised and updated in 1998 by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (London). A more comprehensive critique of the book is offered in the appendix to my aforementioned book: 207–14.

[3] See Michael Meyer, "Where Does Modern Jewish History Begin?" *Judaism* 23 (1975), 329–38; Salo W. Baron, "Ghetto and Emancipation," *Menorah Journal* 14 (1928), 515–26; David B. Ruderman, "The Ghetto and Jewish Cultural Formation in Early Modern Europe: Towards a New Interpretation," in Anita Norich and Yaron Eliav, eds., *Jewish Literatures and Cultures: Context and Intertext* (Providence, RI, 2008), 117–27; Yosef Kaplan, "The Early Modern Period in the Historiographical Production of Jacob Katz" [Hebrew], in Yisrael Bartal and Shmuel Feiner, eds., *Historiyografia ba-Mivhan: Iyyum Mehudash be-Mishnato shel Yaakov Katz* (Jerusalem, 2008), 19–35. For more on Katz's position, see n. 16 below.

[4] On Baron's position, see his *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1937), II, 205–10; and III, 139 n. 13. This was elaborated upon by his student Isaac Barzilay in "The Italian and Berlin Haskalah (Parallels and Differences)," *Proceedings of the American*

was clearly uninterested in merely locating the origins of modernity in an earlier era or in tracing the process of modernization back to its earliest beginnings. He attempted instead to describe an autonomous early modern era whose distinguishing marks were not identical with those of the modern.

Proceeding beyond the partial and limited reflections of his predecessors to offer the first comprehensive portrait of social and intellectual developments in the early modern era across the European continent, Israel's accomplishments were obviously formidable. He produced a fascinating and wide-ranging narrative, offering an impressive mastery of detail while situating the Jewish experience within the contours of western civilization as a whole. The challenge Jewish historians have faced since the appearance of this book is how to question some of its conclusions without necessarily dislodging its well-deserved and influential position in scholarly literature. While Israel had made an important case for a distinct early modern period for Jewish history and ably described its economic and political foundations, his understanding of Jewish culture was deficient in many respects when he first published his book in 1985. Subsequently, the new explosion of scholarship over the last three decades has made his reconstruction appear even more out-dated and incomplete. Israel's characterization of Jewish social and cultural history as primarily reflective and derivative of general trends located in non-Jewish society also requires revision and re-evaluation. The history of Jewish society and culture in early modern Europe is more than a mirror of the Christian world and needs to be described more accurately and more comprehensively than Israel has done. It also needs to be viewed simultaneously from both an external and an internal perspective.

The second challenge is that offered by historians who prefer to speak about the early modern period exclusively from the vantage point of a particular region or locality they study. I refer to such works as the history of Italian Jewry in the Renaissance by Robert Bonfil; Gershon Hundert's overview of Polish–Lithuanian Jewry in the eighteenth century; the comprehensive portraits of western Sephardim in Amsterdam offered by Yosef

Academy for Jewish Research 29 (1960–1), 17–54. On this position, see Adam Shear, "'The Italian and Berlin Haskalah' Revisited," in Shmuel Feiner and David Ruderman, eds., *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007), special issue on "Early Modern Culture and Haskalah – Reconsidering the Borderlines of Modern Jewish History," 49–66. For more on Baron's position, see below. On Yerushalmi and the modernity of the *converso* experience, see Yosef Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* (New York, 1971), 44. On the modernity of the Sabbatean movement, see, for example, Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays in Jewish Spirituality* (New York, 1971), 140–1.

Kaplan, Miriam Bodian, and Daniel Swetschinski; or the synthetic essays of Yosef Hacker on the Jews of the Ottoman Empire – to mention only a few examples. The overarching assumption of their work and that of others is that Jewish history in this period can best be reconstructed on a regional or micro-level. Its variegated histories, according to this perspective, are radically singular, diverse, heterogeneous, lacking common features that might link them together. The general thrust of these recent narratives of early modern Jewish history is to ignore, or even to deny, the possibility that a distinct early modern pan-European Jewish cultural experience can ever be meaningfully described. Without invalidating the important work of writing local and regional histories, I wish to assert that such a broader description is possible and necessary.[5]

The third challenge is the one posed by both European and world historians who have grappled with the slippery term "early modernity." There is, for many historians, some discomfort in relying on this fashionable and convenient label for designating the period from the end of the Middle Ages to the modern age, which is commonly evoked but never clearly defined. Thus, in the oft-quoted words of Randolph Starn: "Early, partly, sometimes, maybe modern, early modern is a period for our period's discomfort with periodization." There is also the more formidable challenge in overcoming the teleological progression from pre-modern to modern which the term "early modern" surely implies. The notion of early modernity has been easily linked to the paradigm of modernization that so long dominated historical writing, where "modern" is deemed capitalistic, industrial, urban, individualistic, bureaucratized, secular, disenchanted, and scientific, while the pre-modern has been deemed feudal, preindustrial, agrarian, religious, and magical. Early modernity is, then, that in-between period that displays some, albeit not all, nascent characteristics of modernity, such as secularization, rationalization, individualization, the rise of the middle class, as well as new scientific discoveries. Such an understanding of early modernity as a critical stage of the triumphant

[5] See Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley, 1994); Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004); Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardic Diaspora in Western* Europe (Leiden, 2000); Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, 1997); Daniel Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London, 2000); and, for example, Joseph Hacker, "The Chief Rabbinate in the Ottoman Empire in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries" [Hebrew], *Zion* 49 (1984), 225–63. In the appendix to my *Early Modern Jewry* (214–20), I discuss especially the work of Robert Bonfil, Yosef Kaplan, Moshe Rosman, Gershon Hundert, David Sorkin, Shmuel Feiner, and Lois Dubin.

march of civilization from one stage of development to an allegedly higher one is obviously inadequate.[6]

When the label "early modernity" is employed by world historians confronting the radical diversity of the regions they study, their comparative search for elements common to all societies often appears superficial and reductive, and even a distortion when viewing the entire globe, either explicitly or implicitly, from a Europeanist perspective. I wish to find a way to overcome the so-called early modern muddle in writing specifically about the Jewish experience.[7]

Beyond these three challenges, one might even question on a more basic level the need for the historian to offer elaborate schemes of periodization in the first place. Any attempt at periodization invites the detailed criticisms of specialists eager to discredit any facile generalizations about the past. We undoubtedly live in an age where periodization schemes have gone out of fashion since they suggest an effort to essentialize, and it is much easier and more certain to focus on the particular than the sweeping explanations of larger historical units.

PROPOSING THE MARKERS OF A TRANSREGIONAL EARLY MODERN JEWISH CULTURE

In light of the above, proposing the need for a bold construction of Jewish cultural history in the early modern period might appear to be highly unrewarding. In presenting this agenda, nevertheless, I wish to claim that historians, in search of useful knowledge, are required at times to step back from their narrow studies, to explore the wider and deeper meaning of an elusive historical past, to uncover not merely a Jewish history specific to a Polish context or an Italian or Ottoman one, but a history of the Jews and their cultural legacy as a whole. There is clearly a potential danger in such an endeavor of distorting or misconstruing the past by imposing upon it the preoccupations of the present. Yet the project of describing a transnational Jewish culture in early modern Europe still remains useful in linking, in some sense, disparate communities and, more significantly, disparate historiographical traditions rarely in contact or in conversation with each other.

Accordingly, I wish to describe, as best I can, the larger patterns of cultural formation affecting early modern Jewry as a whole. Cultural

[6] See Randolph Starn, "The Early Modern Muddle," *Journal of Early Modern History* 6 (2002), 296–307; and Garthine Walker, "Modernization," in her edited book, *Writing Early Modern History* (London, 2005), 15–48, and see her introduction, xvi.

[7] I treat these historians in the appendix to *Early Modern Jewry*, 220–6.

formation for me implies more than "pure" intellectual developments, a history of Jewish ideas, literary texts, and authors. Rather my focus is on the study of the interconnections between intellectual creativity and the political, social, and technological conditions shaping Jewish life in this era. Thus, my focus is on neither a series of readings of individual authors nor even an examination of the general trends of literary production with which Jewish intellectuals were engaged, but rather a broader exploration of ideas and intellectual achievements in their social and political contexts.[8]

In searching for larger patterns, I do not expect to efface the specificities and singularities of the subcultures of Jewish life that other historians have carefully described. Nor do I intend to offer a new master narrative superseding their own individual interpretations. Instead, I propose only another interpretive layer, a perspective on their work that emphasizes connections, contacts, and conversations over time and across specific localities. In this I am especially indebted to the work of Jerry Bentley and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, among others, and their employment respectively of the related concepts of cultural exchange and "connected" histories in addressing the meaning of early modernity for world history at large. These concepts might indeed provide a useful vocabulary in speaking about the variegated Jewish experiences of the early modern period. Connected histories recognize and appreciate disparate local traditions and cultural developments rather than obscuring or obliterating their uniqueness. By defining this era on the basis of intense communication and exposure to other groups and communities, the historian might be better able to speak about a common cultural experience while recognizing the perpetuation of distinct regional and local identities. Accordingly, like Subrahmanyam, I wish to highlight the dialectical relationship between local conditions and continental or even global patterns, and to acknowledge the possible tension between them, but also to insist that looking at the local and specific from the perspective of connected histories is useful and productive in reconstructing this multi-faceted period.[9] In the end, a merely derivative account of Jewish cultural and social history or one

[8] I would be the first to acknowledge my preference for intellectual/cultural history over social history and the history of everyday life, or urban history over the history of rural Jewish settlement. By stating this preference, I acknowledge my own strengths and limitations. And I do not suggest these other histories are any less significant. But I would argue that the five categories I describe below do not apply only to intellectuals and elite groups in Jewish society. In speaking about mobility, communal cohesion, knowledge explosion, rabbinic crisis, and mingled identities, I speak of phenomena with wide-ranging impact on elites and non-elites alike.

[9] Jerry H. Bentley, "Early Modern Europe and the Early Modern World," in Charles H. Parker and Jerry H. Bentley, eds., *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity: Individual and*

fragmented by disparate localized narratives neither satisfies intellectually nor adequately describes the larger picture that might emerge if the sources and their modern-day reconstructions are allowed to connect and to speak with each other.

I consider five elements which might allow me to describe the era as a whole. Each element needs to be examined over the entire period and across regional boundaries to assess its significance as a marker of a newly emerging Jewish cultural experience. These categories overlap, but to my mind they offer us a most promising beginning in speaking about a connected early modern Jewish culture. They also offer an outline for charting an agenda for the future study of the field.

I would be the first to acknowledge that these markers are tentative at best, that they may even describe inadequately and incompletely the larger landscape I wish to define, and that some of the factors affected some people more than others. Nevertheless, I have yet to discover a better way of characterizing the formation of a common Jewish culture whose constituent parts were connected to each other in the early modern period. For the time being, they represent for me the most meaningful rubrics in speaking about the shared historical experience of early modern Jewry. Perhaps these five factors should be regarded as primarily tentative proposals, certainly open-ended and preliminary to the further discussion, research, and interpretation that my own reconstruction might hopefully generate. I have no objection if these five elements are corrected, revised, and expanded in the future, based on new insights from other fields or new research on specific localities still inadequately studied by scholars up to now.[10]

Community in the Modern World (Lanham Boulder, 2007), 13–31; Bentley, "Cross-Cultural Interactions and Periodization in World History," *American Historical Review* 101 (1996), 749–70; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997), 735–62 (repr. in Victor Liebermann, ed., *Beyond Binary Histories: Re-Imagining Eurasia to c. 1800* [Ann Arbor, 1999], 289–316). See more recently his *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford, 2004), and the companion volume, *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks* (Oxford, 2004).

[10] Moshe Rosman ("Early Modern Mingling," *Jewish Review of Books* [Fall 2010], 31–2) has rightfully suggested a sixth element which I think deserves serious attention: the iteration of new expressions of traditional texts and forms. This element might be subsumed partially under the rubric of "knowledge explosion," and is related to the new printing of traditional literatures – legal and homiletical. But it also deserves more scrutiny in its own right. Clearly one of the great weaknesses of contemporary scholarship in this period (and in others) is its lack of serious attention to rabbinic learning and literature on the part of cultural historians. Rabbinic literature is often studied by legal specialists hardly attuned to the context of broad cultural developments. There are

I propose accordingly the following five primary components of the early modern experience for Jews:

1. An accelerated mobility leading to enhanced contacts between Jews and other Jews of differing backgrounds, traditions, and even languages, and between Jews and non-Jews; the strains and stresses these contacts engendered leading both to rapid cultural change and reactionary conservatism. I have in mind the mobility of large numbers of émigrés expelled from their places of origin and forced to seek refuge in new and alien environments, a condition especially noticeable in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but less so in the eighteenth century. But I also refer to the mobility of individuals, especially secondary elites, peripatetic scholars, book dealers, peddlers, restless intellectuals, a relatively constant movement noticeable throughout the entire period and in almost every Jewish community of early modern Europe.
2. A heightened sense of communal cohesiveness throughout all Jewish settlements, reaching an apex in the remarkable Council of Four Lands, the overarching self-government of eastern European Jewry as a whole. Such communal structures often reveal a striking tendency: the increasing decline of rabbinic authority and the rising power of lay oligarchies, although local variations need to be carefully noted. They also raise the intriguing question of the extent to which their existence was a direct function of the conscious policy of the political states that supported them.
3. A knowledge explosion precipitated by the technology of the printing press, but also by other factors such as a growing interest in Jewish books on the part of Christian readers, an expanded curriculum of Jewish learning, and the conspicuous entrance of Jewish elites into the university. This general transformation, more than all the others, seems to be constant and repercussive throughout the entire period and needs to be seen in relation to the factors of mobility and social mixing already mentioned above.
4. A subsequent crisis of rabbinic authority, engendered by many factors, including the previous three, and often expressed through active messianism, mystical prophecy, radical enthusiasm, and heresy. While manifest throughout the entire period, it is most acute in the late

hopeful signs that the history of Jewish law, for example, is being integrated into the wider context of early modern Jewish history as exemplified in the work of historians such as Elhanan Reiner, Maoz Kahana, and others. But it seems to me premature to describe a general and coherent picture of rabbinic cultural developments based on present scholarship.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and leaves its mark in some way on all Jewish communities. It also precipitates a counter-reaction on the part of the rabbinic establishment which we might refer to as the emergence of a united front of "orthodoxy," a term conventionally associated in Jewish history with the nineteenth century.

5. The blurring of religious identities, a factor intimately connected to the previous one, and most prominent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I refer specifically to the emergence of the *conversos* and their attempts to re-enter the Jewish community; the boundary crossings of Sabbateans between Judaism, Islam, and Christianity; the paths of individual Jewish converts to Christianity; as well as the complex uses of Judaism among Christian Hebraists in their own searches for Christian authenticity and identity. This factor is clearly more visible in the West than the East but, given the vast international networks of *converso* merchants and messianic enthusiasts, the expansive presence of both individual converts and Christian students of Judaism from Amsterdam to Krakow and Prague, and its ultimate significance in redefining Judaism and Christianity and their relationship to each other, this factor is surely as significant as the others.

In singling out only these five factors, among many others, I am fully aware that I have left myself open to criticism. One might wonder whether these factors emphasize too strongly radical change and disruption over constancy and continuity within early modern Jewry, and, in so doing, give too much weight to cultural developments more prevalent in the West than in the East. To a certain extent this point is valid, but one might consider as well that, in reflecting primarily on the periodization of early modern Jewish history, it is quite natural and expected to emphasize change over continuity in describing the distinctive features of an era, setting it apart from both the previous one and the one to follow. This would account, for example, for why I have not chosen to single out women and gender in this account. The subject is certainly significant in its own right but, within the context of a chapter on periodization, as opposed to a full history of the period, it is less so; the most significant changes in the status of Jewish women emerge in the modern, not the early modern era.

These five features, although they vary in intensity and frequency throughout this long period and over a vast continental terrain, do capture, to my mind, a sense of the whole in relation to its parts. Mobility, communal cohesion, a knowledge explosion, rabbinical authority in crisis, and a muddling of religious identities clearly transfigure the culture and society of Jews living across Europe in early modern times. By employing

the notions of connected histories and cultural exchange, I hope I have found a useful way to speak about Jews in early modern Europe, recognizable to other early modern historians and comparable with their national and regional historical narratives.

These common conditions also point to a consciousness of a worldwide community transcending local or regional boundaries. Mobility made Jews intensely aware of Jews from other lands and from other cultural settings. Complex communal organizations administering increasingly expansive areas, such as those in eastern and central Europe, naturally facilitated and encouraged constant contact and engagement with their counterparts across Europe and beyond. The printing presses broke down cultural barriers in an unprecedented way, enlarging the horizons of Jews even in the most remote and isolated of regions. The followers of the messianic figure Sabbatai Zevi (Sabbateans) created complex networks of emissaries and followers over vast areas. Their campaign to organize a movement extending from the Middle East to the far corners of the West precipitated in turn strong oppositional structures of rabbis and communal officials who were equally intense in a common cause against the "heretics" crossing political and cultural borders. The mixed identities of *conversos*, Sabbateans, Christian Hebraists, and individual converts, whatever their actual number and wherever they lived, posed a universal threat to those protectors of the communal norms and upholders of traditional praxis and belief. They were menacing to the very foundations of the entire Jewish community, and leaders everywhere were forced to deal with a new reality that destabilized the long-established boundaries demarcating one religion from the other.

Accordingly, these markers signal both a distinctive age and a distinctive cultural experience for all Jews living in the early modern era, as well as the presence of a vast community linked by common values, common circumstances, and common challenges to its very existence. These shared experiences emerge against a reality of cultural, social, and political diversity among the various Jewish subcultures of Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Early modern Jewish life was predicated on profound local and regional differences reflected in distinct languages, customs, political structures, and ritual life. But within this heterogeneity of recognizable local traditions and practices, there emerged a clear sense of connectedness. Jews were members of Polish, German, Ottoman, Sephardic, and Italian communities, while being simultaneously in contact with, and aware of their affiliation with, Jews everywhere. In times of crisis and stress, such as that engendered by the Sabbatean heresy, this feeling was especially magnified.

THE JEWISH ENLIGHTENMENT: AN OUTGROWTH OF EARLY MODERNITY

Viewing the cultural world of the Jewish Enlightenment (known as the Haskalah) from the perspective of the structural changes highlighted above raises some interesting questions about the conventional periodization of the second half of the eighteenth century as the actual beginning of modern Jewish culture and society. Why indeed, from the perspective of early modern Jewish history, is the ideational world of the Haskalah traditionally perceived as a radical break from the past, iconoclastic in shaping a new secular consciousness, a new intellectual elite, and a new construction of Jewish identity?[11] How novel and revolutionary was its intellectual production? From the perspective of the dynamic intellectual universe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the eighteenth century in Jewish thought seems rather unspectacular in the novelty of its formulations and in the intensity of its contacts with the outside world. Its significance lies rather in its radical impact within the political, social, and pedagogic spheres, not necessarily the intellectual/cultural, even when one considers such exceptional thinkers as Moses Mendelssohn or Solomon Maimon. If one compares how thoroughly up-to-date and how genuinely aware such early modern writers as Azariah de' Rossi, Joseph Delmedigo, or Simone Luzzatto were of their immediate intellectual surroundings with the relatively limited cognizance of their counterparts some 150 years later, the contrast is truly striking.

Note a similar sentiment from Paul Hazard in his classic book regarding European culture in general:

> The daring utterances of the *Aufklarung*, of the age of light, pale in insignificance before the aggressive audacity of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, the amazing declarations of the *Ethics*. Neither Voltaire nor Frederick II ever came near the ungovernable anti-clerical, anti-religious frenzy of Toland and his like. Had Locke never been born, d'Alembert would never have penned the "Discours preliminaire" to the *Encyclopedia*.[12]

Very much in step with Hazard's position was the young aforementioned Salo W. Baron, writing in the first edition of his *Social and Religious History of the Jews* in 1937. Hidden in a footnote, he wrote: "Compared

[11] This is the view, for example, of Shmuel Feiner in *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2004). In his more recent work, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, 2010), he expands his depiction of intellectual and social life beyond the Haskalah and into the first half of the nineteenth century.

[12] Paul Hazard, *The European Mind 1680–1715*, trans. from French J. Lewis May (Harmondsworth, 1964), 502–3.

with Leone Ebreo and Spinoza, the sage of Dessau [Mendelssohn] appears to be more of a medieval apologist than a modern secular philosopher. The Mendelssohnian school, by programatically republishing in 1794 Azariah de' Rossi's *Light of the Eyes*, symbolized its indebtedness to the Italian pioneers."

And, earlier, he categorically stated: "But all the fundamental tendencies of the *Haskalah*, such as secular learning, a 'purified' Hebrew tongue, historicism and the revolt of the individual against communal power, had become more and more marked in Italy and Holland long before Mendelssohn."[13] Baron apparently had second thoughts about the notion of an Italian or Dutch Haskalah since he removed any traces of it in the later edition of his multi-volume history, and, beside the brief comment cited here, he failed to develop his insight any more.

The Israeli historian Jacob Katz in his own classic account of the beginnings of modernity, *Out of the Ghetto* (1973), and Baruch Mevorah, in the well-known critical review of Azriel Shohat's study of the intellectual world of early eighteenth-century German Jewry, had seemingly put Baron's unsubstantiated inclination to rest in their clear-cut distinction between the cultural life of early modern Jews and that of the Haskalah. For Katz, the real innovation of the Haskalah was its ideology of change and reform of Jewish culture and society, based on his own conviction that ideologically articulated shifts in conscious thought are the landmarks of historical change. Since the earlier patterns of intellectual and cultural changes were not ideologically driven, they had less significance in the process of Jewish modernization.[14]

Katz's position has subsequently been challenged in recent historical writing over the issue of whether cultural change is only or primarily driven by ideology, and more generally for his own Germanocentricism in understanding modern Jewish history.[15] Nevertheless, Yosef Kaplan has

[13] Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1937), III, 139 n. 13. For more on Baron's position, see also note 4 above.

[14] Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation 1770–1870* (Cambridge, MA, 1973); Mevorah's review of Azriel Shohat's, *Im Ḥilufei ha-Tekufot* appeared in *Kiryat Sefer* 37 (1961–2), 150–5. For Katz's lack of clarity regarding an early modern period, see n. 3 above.

[15] See Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, 1987), especially the essay by Todd Endelman. See also Jonathan Frankel and Steven Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 1992); and Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson, eds., *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton, 1995), especially the introductions to each of the last two volumes. One should also note how each collection is a response to and a refinement of the preceding volume.

generally followed Katz's position regarding cultural change in articulating his own understanding of Dutch Jewish culture of the seventeenth century. Kaplan mentions Baron's proposal of a Dutch Haskalah but discounts it because Dutch Jews offered no conscious ideology as an alternative to traditional faith and praxis. Although Dutch Jews created a thoroughly unique environment, claims Kaplan, one distancing the realms of the sacred from the secular, characterized by constant cultural and social interactions with non-Jewish society, and based on "an invented tradition," this was not a Haskalah and should not be connected with the momentous changes of the later period. Kaplan adds that, despite the innovations of this seventeenth-century society, the intellectual elite was basically conservative and cautious, with respect to both religious and scientific thought.[16]

Perhaps it might be appropriate to reconsider the refreshing audacity of Baron's youthful reflection. Kaplan's emphatic rejection of the notion of a Dutch Haskalah needs to be considered with two additional observations. Conservatism, as we now know well from the study of nineteenth-century orthodoxy, is just as much an ideological response to modernity as bold or radical reform and innovation are.[17] Moreover, one should not consider the cultural climate of seventeenth-century Amsterdam in isolation from its Italian counterpart. When these two cultural experiences are viewed side by side, it is clear that the Italian is less conservative, more innovative and daring in its formulation of Jewish thought and in its dialogue with the non-Jewish world. Since both of these communities were essential pieces of the larger cultural landscape shared by all early modern Jews, the Dutch experience should not be considered in isolation but in relation to what transpired in Italy both before and during its "golden age."

[16] Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 1–28, esp. 26. But compare his significant reservations about Katz's approach in "The Early Modern Period" (see n. 3 above), where he argues that Katz hardly acknowledged an early modern period distinct from the medieval and failed to integrate the larger structural changes in early modern Europe into his own internalist view of Jewish historical development.

[17] See, for example, Michael Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* (New York, 1992), 23–84. This is also well argued in Yosef Kaplan's own study of the development of "orthodoxy" in Amsterdam in "Secularizing the Portuguese Jews: Integration and Orthodoxy in Early Modern Judaism," in Feiner and Ruderman, eds., *Early Modern Culture and Haskalah*, 99–110. See also Adam Ferziger, *Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy, Nonobservance, and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia, 2005).

EARLY HASKALAH, EARLY MODERNITY, AND HASKALAH RECONSIDERED

The complex relationship between an early modern Jewish culture and the Haskalah is further obscured by the positions of Shmuel Feiner and David Sorkin regarding a so-called early Haskalah. For both historians, for somewhat different reasons, it is useful to divide the history of the Jewish Enlightenment into two distinct periods: a period roughly falling between 1720 and 1770, called the early Haskalah, and the Haskalah proper beginning in the 1770s and 1780s. For both historians, the earlier period had primarily an intellectual and religious coloring, whereas the later period focused more on reforming Jewish society through an emphasis on social and political activity. In Feiner's view, the early *maskilim* were itinerant intellectuals, physicians, men of traditional Jewish learning primarily from Germany, Poland, and Lithuania, who devoted themselves to the construction of a rational view of Judaism, grounded in humanism and an appreciation of the natural world. In their common agenda to expand the intellectual borders of Judaism without undermining traditional Jewish norms, they emerged as an enthusiastic new republic of letters, a secondary elite who, through the publication of their Hebrew works, contributed to the enlargement of Jewish cultural horizons and paved the way for – while not necessarily being connected to – the later ideological movement of the 1770s and 1780s. Feiner even stressed that Mendelssohn himself, in contradistinction to his disciples, was actually not a member of this later group.[18]

Informed by their definition of an "early Haskalah," it might be useful to suggest the following proposition: Jewish cultural history during most of

[18] See Shmuel Feiner, "The Early Haskalah in Eighteenth-Century Judaism" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 67 (1997–8), 189–240; Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*; and David Sorkin, "The Early Haskalah," in his *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought: Orphans of Knowledge* (London, 2000), 38–92. See also Shmuel Feiner, "Mendelssohn and Mendelssohn's Disciples: A Re-examination," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 40 (1995), 133–67. I should point out that Feiner's and Sorkin's positions are not identical, although they adopt the same term. Feiner particularly emphasizes the aspect of "seduction" in describing the passionate pursuit of non-Jewish knowledge by these early *maskilim*. See especially his "Seductive Science and the Emergence of the Secular Jewish Intellectual," *Science in Context* 15 (2002), 121–35. Sorkin's more recent work has moved away from describing a specific Jewish Enlightenment and focuses more on how the latter participates in a more general religious Enlightenment. See David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, 2008). For a different view of Mendelssohn as more of a political activist, see François Guesnet, "Moses Mendelssohns Tätigkeit als Fürsprecher im Kontext jüdischer politischer Kultur der frühen Neuzeit," *Jahrbuch für deutsch-jüdische Geschichte* 16 (2005–6), 115–34.

the eighteenth century, at least until its last decades, needs to be situated within the early modern period – that is, not as a precursor or early stage of the Haskalah, nor interpreted through the lens of later Haskalah developments. The early *maskilim*, so designated by Shmuel Feiner and David Sorkin, have a long pedigree. They emerge centuries earlier in ways quite different from their medieval counterparts, as products of the knowledge explosion generated by the printing press and by the universities of early modern Europe. These early *maskilim* of the eighteenth century, predominantly Ashkenazic Jews, are a familiar manifestation of an already fully developed phenomenon of Jewish intellectual life. Jewish scholars without ideological agendas other than to educate themselves and their students more broadly in multiple disciplines, and to integrate and reconcile this knowledge within the framework of Jewish tradition were part and parcel of the cultural profile of early modern Jewish elites, both primary and secondary, from at least the sixteenth century.[19] The early *maskilim* simply followed the well-trodden steps of such luminaries as Judah Messer Leon, Azariah de' Rossi, Solomon ibn Verga, Judah Moscato, Abraham Portaleone, Tobias Cohen, Simone Luzzatto, Menasseh ben Israel, Orobrio de Castro, and many others. While Italy of the late fifteenth century represents the point of origin of this new type of *ḥakham kolel* ("universal sage"), the term used to describe boldly this new Jewish scholar in the first book printed in the lifetime of its fifteenth-century author, Judah Messer Leon, the image and the actual writings of these scholars were known throughout Europe both in their own time and during the eighteenth century.[20] The Maharal's defiant criticism, emanating from distant Prague, of Azariah de' Rossi's provocative reading of the *aggadah* in Mantua in the sixteenth century,[21] or Isaac Satanov's republication of

[19] Compare the profiles of the intellectuals collected in David Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri, eds., *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia, 2004), especially my introduction, with the early *maskilim* of Feiner and Sorkin. The only significant difference is that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century figures were more learned in languages other than Hebrew, especially Latin, and more catholic in their intellectual interests than their later eighteenth-century counterparts.

[20] On Messer Leon and his scholarly agenda, see Robert Bonfil, "Introduction" to the facsimile edition of Judah Messer Leon's *Nofet Zufim* (Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1981); Bonfil, "The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow by Judah Messer Leon: The Rhetorical Dimension of Jewish Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Italy," *Frank Talmage Memorial Volume, Jewish History* 6 (1992), 21–33; and Abraham Melamed, "Rhetoric and Philosophy in Nofet Zufim," *Italia* 1, 2 (1978), 7–38. See also the edition of Isaac Rabinowitz, *The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow . . . by Judah Messer Leon* (Ithaca, 1983).

[21] See Lester Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de' Rossi's Me'or Einayim* (Philadelphia, 1989), 153–61; and Robert Bonfil, "Some Reflections on the

de' Rossi's *Me'or Einayim* in 1794, are two dramatic manifestations of the impact of the cultural agenda of the *ḥakham kolel* across space and time.[22]

If the early Haskalah is best understood as an organic part of early modern Jewish culture, can we speak of its latest phase as a modern phenomenon? In my estimation, the primary ingredient of a modern Jewish culture, distinguishing it from the early modern, is the changing political landscape of western and eastern Europe as it affected the Jews, the impact of enlightened absolutism on Jewry policy, the political debates and limited successes of civil emancipation, and the subsequent use and misuse of Jewish minorities as tools of nineteenth-century nationalism. In dating the beginning of modern Jewish history to *c.* 1782, and classifying anything before it as early modern Jewish history, I know I am certainly following in the footsteps of many historians, from Simon Dubnov on.[23] But through my new reiteration, I hope to underscore the Haskalah proper as primarily a political, pedagogic, and programmatic movement committed to transforming Ashkenazic Jewish culture. Following Shmuel Feiner in this manner of thinking, Mendelssohn was more an early modern Jewish figure than a modern one, although the image created by his followers transformed him into a modern cultural icon.[24] When the Haskalah was institutionalized and politicized, following David Sorkin's terminology,[25] it became a modern

Place of Azariah de Rossi's Meor Eynayim in the Cultural Milieu of Italian Renaissance Jewry," in Bernard Cooperman, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 23–48. See, more recently, David Sorotzkin, *Orthodoxia u-Mishtar ha-Moderniyut: Hafakatah shel ha-Masoret ha-Yehudit be-Eropah be-Et ha-Ḥadashah* (Tel Aviv, 2011), esp. 133–77.

[22] See David Ruderman, "The Impact of Early Modern Jewish Thought on the Eighteenth Century: A Challenge to the Notion of the Sephardic Mystique," in Resianne Smidt van Gelder-Fontaine, Andrea Schatz, and Irene Zwiep, eds., *Sepharad in Ashkenaz: Medieval Knowledge and Eighteenth-Century Enlightened Jewish Discourse* (Amsterdam, 2007); and *Light of the Eyes of Azariah de' Rossi*, trans. from Hebrew with intro. and annotations by Joanna Weinberg (New Haven, 2001), "Introduction."

[23] Dubnov opened modern Jewish history with the French Revolution and the beginnings of Jewish political emancipation. Compare my position with Shmuel Feiner, "On the Threshold of the 'New World' – Haskalah and Secularization in the Eighteenth Century," in Feiner and Ruderman, eds., *Early Modern Culture and Haskalah*, 33–45, esp. 43–5.

[24] But compare François Guesnet's assessment of Mendelssohn, in "Moses Mendelssohns Tätigkeit als Fürsprecher," as a new-style Jewish leader willing to address the political forum of public opinion. See also Guesnet, "The Turkish Cavalry in Swarzędz, or: Jewish Political Culture at the Borderlines of Modern History," in Feiner and Ruderman, eds., *Early Modern Culture and Haskalah*, 227–48.

[25] David Sorkin, "The Haskalah in Berlin: A Comparative Perspective" [Hebrew], in Shmuel Feiner and Israel Bartal, eds., *Ha-Haskalah le-Givuneah: Iyyunim Ḥadashim be-Toledot ha-Haskalah uve-Sifruta* (Jerusalem, 2005), 3–12.

phenomenon and no longer an early modern one. Accordingly, the real pioneers of the Haskalah were those offering a political agenda of Jewish modernization, men such as Naphtali Wessely and Isaac Euchel, and not Mendelssohn. The year 1782, of course, was not only the one in which Emperor Joseph II issued his edict of tolerance but also the year of publication of Wessely's famous ideological manifesto of the Haskalah movement, his *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* [Words of Peace and Truth].

Following Sorkin's early reading of the transformation of German Jewish culture, the Haskalah was, for the most part, a German-Jewish development from its beginnings, emerging primarily out of a condition of cultural deprivation, of inequity, and of a sense of intellectual inferiority and a deep-seated need to catch up with a world that had passed Jews by.[26] The Haskalah was an attempt by Ashkenazic Jews, first in Germany and later in eastern Europe, to acquire what other European Jews had enjoyed for centuries. The ideological program of the Haskalah was relevant to Jews who themselves lacked the cultural opportunities available to their coreligionists in other European communities. In such places as Italy, the Netherlands, or England, such ideological advocacy was generally unnecessary and thus relatively absent.

VIEWING THE MODERN ERA IN THE LIGHT OF THE EARLY MODERN

Up until this point I have focused on the continuities and discontinuities between early modern Jewish culture and the Haskalah in its various phases. But modernity, as I have already indicated, is a larger and more complex phenomenon than the Haskalah movement alone. For many historians, modernization is neither primarily about the flood of new ideas nor about educational and cultural agendas, but about political, legal, and socio-economic processes. Roughly at the same time as the appearance of Wessely's educational pamphlet, the French and American revolutions in the West and the partitions of Poland in the East took place. And generally within the same time frame, European states experienced, to varying degrees, intense urbanization and industrialization, the aggressive consolidation of national economies, and the break-up of an older estate system of privileged and powerful groups upon which mercantile governments had relied. The emergence of the public sphere, of partial or sometimes full political and legal emancipation, of the development of democratic electorates and modern citizenship, of political parties, nationalist ideologies, and more suggests a rapidly changing social and political

[26] David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780–1840* (Oxford, 1987).

universe where new pressures were being placed on Jewish individuals, their families, and their collective institutions and leaders. This is not the place to describe these processes in detail but only to point to a radically different political and social reality for Jews that sharply contrasted with the processes we have carefully traced in early modern Europe.

Underscoring the difference between our period and its successor, however, should not blind us from observing the obvious continuities between the two. We have already mentioned the intellectual linkages between early modern Jewish intellectuals and the early *maskilim*. Accelerated mobility, the dissemination of printed books, pamphlets, and newspapers, the diminution of rabbinic authority, and the blurring of religious identities are primary factors for Jewish culture both in the early modern and modern periods. Even the condition of communal cohesion we have pointed to in describing early modernity was never fully eroded in the modern era. No doubt, political emancipation and the civic pressures of the new modern states precipitated the fragmentation of Jewish collective life to a greater degree than in the past. Nevertheless, as Birnbaum and Katznelson emphasize, modernization created new forms of communal cohesion as it destroyed old forms. The rabbis still remained a force to contend with in the nineteenth century and beyond as they discovered new ways of influencing their constituencies; the organized Jewish community was hardly a spent institution; and even assimilated Jews continued to identify themselves as Jews ethnically and religiously.[27]

Thus, the transition that Jacob Katz once called "out of the ghetto" was never about a clean break between one era and the next, and no historian who attempts to distinguish one period from another should expect any neat and uncomplicated partitions between them. When we add to this mix the complex regional variations, the variegated political, economic, and social structures of each locality in which Jews lived, and the cultural, linguistic, and religious differences originating in the specific environments to which they were exposed, then the presumption that one can delineate the general contours of any epoch or differentiate it decisively from another might indeed be called into question.

I still remain convinced, however, as I have argued from the start, that the exercise in which I have been engaged serves worthwhile ends. One such result is to undermine once and for all a view long entrenched in modern Jewish historiography of an inevitable one-dimensional and one-directional path from servitude to emancipation, from communal solidarity to disintegration, from ghettoization to citizenship, and from a normative

[27] See Birnbaum and Katznelson, eds., *Paths of Emancipation*, 19–20, 26–7.

tradition to radical assimilation. This trajectory, labeled by Jonathan Frankel as the bipolar focus of nationalist historiography, originating in the writing of Simon Dubnov, has long dominated the way the process of modernization has been described. It is no doubt a specifically Jewish instance of the flawed paradigm of modernization, one which posits the triumphant march of civilization from the inferior condition of a traditional pre-modern society to a more superior modern one.[28]

The term "early modernity," if taken literally, as I have mentioned earlier, preserves the false dichotomy between tradition and modernity and the implied teleology of a supposed progression from one to the other by simply introducing an intermediate stage between the two. Thus "early modernity" might be taken to denote a kind of inevitable transition from the allegedly backward condition of medievalism to the more advanced one of modernity. When shorn of its literal meaning in designating an early stage of modernity and utilized solely as a neutral label for demarcating a specific epoch in history, neither medieval nor modern, the construction of an early modern period of Jewish history might still allow us to overcome the polarizing tendencies of the "nationalist" approach. Early modernity contains elements conventionally labeled both medieval and modern; its overlapping characteristics defy reduction to either one pole or the other. By locating prominent trends usually deemed modern in the early modern period, such as mobility, knowledge explosion, or heresy and orthodoxy, while recognizing the novelty of later developments such as the politics of the modern state, the sharp juxtaposition between traditional/pre-modern and modern is blunted. A more nuanced and more profound understanding of constancy and change ultimately emerges. Those who would see the modern world as a sweeping transformation or the Haskalah as a radical break from the past, a kind of revolution shattering the old while ushering in the new, might indeed reconsider such extreme dichotomies when examining the three centuries preceding the late eighteenth century. In aligning the early modern with the modern, carefully tracing the evolution of one to the other, while discerningly noting their convergences and divergences, the myth of a radical modernity itself is called into question.

[28] See Jonathan Frankel, "Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-century Europe: Towards a New Historiography?" in Frankel and Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community*, 1–37. See also Walker, "Modernization," 25–48.

My own discussion here parallels nicely the rich and perspicuous reflections of Andrea Schatz, "'Peoples Pure of Speech:' The Religious, the Secular, and Jewish Beginnings of Modernity," in Feiner and Ruderman, eds., *Early Modern Culture and Haskalah*, 169–87, esp. its opening section entitled "Beginnings," 170–8.

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INDEX

Aailion, Solomon, 517
Aaron "ha-Gadol" of Karlin, 643
Abbas I, Shah, 1047–8
Abbas II, Shah, 1048–9
Aboab, Samuel, 700
Abraham the Angel, 640
Abulafia, Abraham, 448, 450
acculturation. *See also* integration
  and beards, 782–4
  in the Enlightenment, 1063–4
  in France, 933–4
  in Iran, 1054
Adriani, Matthias, 317–18
Adrutiel, Abraham, 440–2
African Jewry. *See also* North Africa
  and the Lost Tribes of Israel, 1022–3
  migration from Iberia, 1023
  migration from the Ottoman Empire, 837
  Southern, 1032–4
  West, 1030–2
agriculture
  in Italy, 871
  in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 588–95
  in Suriname, 991
Akbar, Mughal Emperor, 1036
alcohol
  and gentile wine, 691–704
  Ottoman rules forbidding, 851
  trade in, 585, 823, 840
Alexander VII, Pope, 36–7
Alfasi, Isaac, 881
Alkabets, Solomon, 459
Almosnino of Salonika, Moshe, 263
Amherst, Jeffrey, 1007
Amlak, Sagga, 1027
Amsterdam
  Deventer Houtmarkt, 900, 901
  as economic center, 153
  education in, 421
  Hebrew printing in, 297–308
  and immigration, 146–7, 977–80
  Jewish community as *natie*, 903
  Jewish Emancipation in, 1065
  Karaites in, 399–400
  and the *Mahamad*, 384–5
  media in, 906
  music in, 728–9
  rabbinic power in, 386–9
  religious devotion in, 913–15
Andrea, Giovanni, 29
anti-rationalist thought, 540
antisemitism. *See also* expulsions of Jews; fear of Jews
  in the Caribbean, 988–90
  in England, 962–4
  in French science and philosophy, 936–8
  in North America, 1003, 1009, 1013–19
  in the Protestant Reformation, 66–8
anusim, 203, 204–5, *See also conversos*
apologetics, 161, 245, 539
Aquinas, Thomas, 22, 28
Arakal of Tabriz, 1049n
architecture, 710–12, 982
Arias Montano, Benito, 332, 337–8
Arnstein, Fanny von, 784
Arnstein, Henriette von, 784
art, Jewish
  and architecture, 710–12
  beautification of printed texts, 706–8
  domestic figurative, 715–16
  patronage, 709
  ritual art, 708–9
  ritual objects, 713–15, 772
Aryeh ben Judah Lieb, 301
Asa, Abraham, 266
Asher, Saul, 672–3
Ashkenazi, Bezalel, 857
Ashkenazi, Matthias Bloch, 503
Ashkenazi, Mordecai, 512–13, 519
Ashkenazi, Nathan, 495–504, 617–18, 878

Ashkenazic Jews. *See also* German Jewry; Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth; Sephardic Jews
  affected by the struggle between Catholics and Protestants, 381
  decentralized government in eastern Europe, 234–41
  differentiation and survival, 247–50
  in the Dutch Republic, 895, 909–12, 914–15
  embracing the Kabbalah, 468
  in England, 957–60
  and Halakhah, 360–3
  migrating to the New World, 993
  musical traditions, 720–1
  philosophy and science among, 533–8
  and rabbinic authority, 350–2
  religious devotion, 607–23, 935–6
  society and culture, 241–7
  and state conflict, 250–5
  survival in Christian nations, 247–50
Asiatic Brethren, Order of the, 778–9
Assembly of Jewish Notables (Napoleonic), 1080
astronomy
  in Ashkenaz, 536
  and scientific rationalism, 616–17
Augsburg, Peace of, 747
Augustine of Hippo, 21–2
autonomy. *See also* community organization; *kahal*; law
  and citizenship, 938–9
  in the Dutch Republic, 902
  in eastern Europe, 250–5
  in Germany, 737–9
  in the Habsburg Empire, 773–5
  Jewish legal, 124–8, 192–4
  of the *kahal*, 802–3
  in the Ottoman Empire, 87–8, 89, 95–7, 234
  parnasim, 384–5, 402, 875, 978, 979, 991
  in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 131–2, 802–13
  of port Jews, 559
ayhud, 1026–7, *See also* Ethiopian Jewry
Azikri, Eleazar, 110, 357, 465

Ba'al Shem Tov, Israel
  effect on the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 818
  as founder of Hasidism, 619, 620, 648, 800
  influence on Tzoref, 514
  life of, 631–3
  and magic, 487
  Sefer ha-Ḥeshek, 625
ba'alei shem, 615–16, 625–8. *See also* Hasidism; *tzaddikim*
Bacharach, Ya'ir Ḥayyim, 367
Bachrach, Naftali, 469, 481–2
Bacon, Francis, 999
Baghdadis, 1036–8
Bakhur, Eliyahu, 721
baptism. *See also* conversions and conversion policies
  fear of Jewish reversal of, 23
  forced, 26–8
  and the good of the faith, 36
  and ritual drowning, 65–6
Barnai, Jacob, 507–8
Baron, Salo, W.
  Ghetto and Emancipation, 1059
  on Jewish enlightenment, 552–4
  on Jewish population growth in Europe, 229–30
  on modernist tendencies in Jewish communities, 1090, 1100
Bartolocci, Giulio, 885
Baruch, Baruch ben, 696
Bas Tovim, Sarah, 614
Basilea, Solomon Aviad Sar-Shalom, 884
Bavli, Menaḥem ben Moshe, 692, 696
Bayezid II, Ottoman Sultan, 80, 89, 98, 105
Bayle, Pierre, 1069
beards, 782–4
beggars. *See* poverty
Beit-Arié, Malachi, 291
Ben Ze'ev, Judah Leib, 660
Bendavid, Lazarus, 672–3
Bene Israel (India), 1027–9, 1038–42
Benedict XIII, Pope, 16, 26, 32
Benedict XIV, Pope, 38, 41–2, 884
Bennassar, Bartolomé, 215
Bentley, Jerry, 1094
Benveniste, Hayyim, 857
Berekhia Berakh ben Isaac Eisik, 469
Berkovitz, Jay, 680
Berlin Jews, 751, 1070–1, 1082–5
Bernier, François, 1029
Berr, Berr Isaac, 939, 940
Bertram, Corneille, 341
Berukhim, Abraham, 460–1
Besht. *See* Ba'al Shem Tov, Israel
bet din, 353, 354, 929, 934
bet ha-midrash, 815–16
Bible
  Bomberg's Rabbinic, 327, 331–2
  and education of *conversos*, 260–2
  Hebrew, 343

Latin Vulgate, 332
Polyglot, 330
vernacular translations of, 330–1
biblical criticism, 330, 331
Bibliotheca Magna Rabbinica, 885
bipolar mental illness, 493–504, 510
Birnbaum, Pierre, 1062
blood statute decree, 205–7, 597, 819
blue laws, 1013–14
Bodian, Miriam, 1092
Bollandists, 38–9
Bomberg, Daniel, 295–7, 326–7
Bonacich, Edna, 578
Bonfil, Robert
on *conversos'* contribution to Jewish self-determination, 393
on Italian Renaissance Jewish history, 1092
on the Kabbalah, 455, 456–7
Bonfils, Joseph Tov Elem Samuel, 171
books. *See also* literature, Jewish
art in, 712–13
banned, 52–3
burning of, 29
foundations of, 291–2, 326–7
handwritten, 293–4
and Hebrew printing, 295–7
kabbalistic, 484
and manuscript tradition, 297–308
in Ottoman Empire libraries, 107
and prayer, 934–5
singular nature of, 292–5
in vernacular languages, 308–11, 330–1
Böschenstain, Johannes, 52–3
Boton, Abraham de, 857
Brahe, Tycho, 617
Braudel, Fernand, 694
Brazil
connection to Amsterdam, 977
Jewish migration to, 972–4, 1000
Bregoli, Francesca, 571–2
Briel, Judah, 884
Broughton, Hugh, 69
Brown, Charles Brockden, 999
Bruce, James, 1029
Bucer, Martin, 55
burial rituals. *See also* cemeteries
in France, 933
kabbalistic rituals at, 459–60, 463–4, 483
burial societies, 780–5, 806–7
burning at the stake, 35, *See also* Iberian Inquisitions
business agents, 158–60
Buxtorf, Johannes, the Elder
and contemporary Jews, 344
and rabbinical exegesis, 59–61, 332
Synagoga Judaica, 59–61, 344
Tiberias, 332
Buxtorf, Johannes, the Younger, 61, 332

Caffiero, Marina, 886
Calimani, Simone, 881–2
Calvin, John
differences with Martin Luther, 56–8
principal religious concepts of, 57
Calvinism. *See also* Protestant Reformation; Reformed Church
double election theology, 57
emphasis on Hebrew studies in, 61
excommunication in, 401
Campanella, Tomasso, 34
Canadian Jewry, 1019
cantors, 726–8, *See also* music, Jewish
Capistrano, Giovanni de, 26
Cappel, Louis, 61
Capsali, Elijah, 173, 413
Cardoso, Abraham Miguel, 502–3, 515–16, 879
Cardoso, Isaac, 381
Cargo Cult effect, 519
Caribbean
antisemitism, 988–90
conversions and conversion policies, 992–3
and Jewish Emancipation, 1066–7
Jewish privileges in the, 985–8
messianism, 980–4
population dispersal, 973–7
Sabbatean mysticism, 982–4
ties to London and Amsterdam, 978–80
Carvajal, Luis de, 217–18
Casa dei catecumeni, 45
Catherine of Braganza, 1037
Catherine the Great, Russian Empress, 1084
Catholic Church. *See also* Christians; Papal Inquisition
and acceptance of *judeoconversos*, 203–7
and censorship of Talmud, 245, 310–11
Christian purity in, 22–3
during Protestant Reformation, 17–18, 20–1, 26–7, 52–3
in the Dutch Republic, 901
excommunication, 401–5
and Italian Jewry, 883–6
Jewish attitudes to the, 18–19, 23, 27–31, 216–17, 804
and restrictions on Jews, 742, 869
and ritual murder charges, 54

Catholic Church (cont.)
against secularism, 41
cemeteries. *See also* burial rituals
allocation by social status, 392–3, 806–7
eulogies delivered in, 429
importance in Jewish culture, 189
Cesarani, David, 561
Chaim ben Isaak of Volozhin, 820
charity
in the Caribbean, 978
in the Dutch Republic, 905–6
in France, 928
in Italian ghettos, 876
Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, 64, 67, 68, 147
Chmielnicki uprising. *See* Khmelnytsky uprising
Chotsch, Yerachmiel, 468
Christian Hebraism
and the Hebrew Bible, 325–33
in Italy, 885
and Jewish life, 342–4
and Jewish music traditions, 726
and Judaism, 59–64, 825–6
and Kabbalah, 322–5
and politics, 340–2
and Renaissance humanism, 316–21
tensions in, 321–2
tools for the study of, 333–5
and translations of texts, 335–40
Christian purity
and attitudes to Jews, 28–9, 214, 951–2
and Jewish acceptance, 21–2
and the reversal of Jewish baptisms, 23
Christians. *See also* Catholic Church
Armenian, 1050
conversion to Judaism, 915
cordial relationship with Dutch Jews, 903–7
and early modern economic practices, 160–2
Ethiopian, 1027
legal agreements with Jewish businessmen, 804
Chronicle of the Carmelites, 1050
Chronicle of the Ottoman Sultans, 263
Chrysostom, John, 21
Chuli, Jacob, 857
Cisneros, Francisco Jiménez de, 325–6
citizenship. *See also* Emancipation, Jewish; legal status, of Jews
and Christian purity, 22–3
and confessional unity in Papal States, 20
in France, 938–40
and the "Jew Bill,", 962–4
and the Jewish Roman ghetto, 20–1
civic equality. *See also* Emancipation, Jewish
in the Dutch Republic, 919–20
and the Edict of Toleration, 784, 789, 792
in France, 751, 941–5
in the Habsburg Empire, 794
Italian attempts at, 886–92
and Moses Mendelssohn, 665–9, 812
of port Jews, 557, 561–3
civil law
in France, 930–1
and hearing of Jewish cases, 46
and Jewish preference for non-Jewish courts, 193
and the Jewish regional councils, 809–11
in the Ottoman Empire, 95
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 236
and rabbinic culture, 353–6
and state economic decisions, 146–55
classical philosophy. *See also* philosophy and science, Jewish
in Hebrew, 526
in Italy, 529–30
and Jewish migration from Spain to the Ottoman Empire, 527–9
Jewish study of, 523
Clement XIV, Pope, 41
Clermont-Tonnerre, Stanislas de, 938–9
Cochin Jewry, 1042–4
Code civil, 20
Code noir, 987
coffee houses, 840
Cohen, Naphtali, 749
Cohen Porto, Moses, 697
commerce. *See* economic activity
common law. *See* civil law
Commonwealth, Jewish (*Respublica Hebraica*), 341
community organization. *See also* autonomy; excommunication; *kahal*
in the Dutch Republic, 919–20
in early modern times, 128–31
effect of state intrusion in eighteenth century, 194–6
in England, 966–9
in France, 928–30
and Hasidism, 488, 649–50
ḥevrot, 185–8
hierarchy of, 128–31, 170–4
in Italian ghettos, 874
leadership, 174–6
parnasim, 384–91, 402, 875, 978, 979, 991
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 595–600, 628–9, 805
of Sephardic Jews, 389–91, 400–5

in the Sephardic trading diaspora, 155–60
takkanot in, 171, 173, 178
Compagnoni, Giuseppe, 888
Condillac, Etienne Bonnot de, 656
confessionalized unity (Papal States), 46
congregations. *See* community organization
Consiglio, Abtalion, 697–8
consistory system, 943–4
Constantinople. *See also* Istanbul
Jacob Huli in, 275–6
Ladino language in, 269, 271
Spanish emigration to, 152, 266
constitution (Jewish), 1015
contraception, 873
conversions and conversion policies. *See also* baptism; kidnapping
and banning books, 52
in the Caribbean, 992–3
Catholic, 16, 17–19, 41, 44–6, 885
and Christian purity, 22
convert houses, 34, 46–7
and fear of Jews, 24
of Habsburg Jewish elite, 781–2
in Iran, 1046–9
and mysticism, 324, 500
in North America, 997–8
to obtain civic rights, 758
in the Ottoman Empire, 94, 842–4
in Protestant England, 951–2
during the Protestant Reformation, 19–20, 31–8, 64–6
and the Roman ghetto, 20–1
conversos. *See also anusim*; *judeoconversos*; New Christians
in Amsterdam, 913
Iberian Marranos, 381–2, 395–7, 399
Ibero-Romance languages, 257–9
judeoconversos, 157–8, 201–18
in the Ottoman Empire, 260–4, 458
Portuguese, 218–23
and the right to self-definition, 393–400
seventeenth-century movement of, 264–5
Copernicanism, 538–40
coplas. *See* poetry, Jewish
Coppoli, Fortunato de, 26
Corcos, Tranquillo Vita, 884
Cordovero, Moses, 459–60, 461–5, 466
Corpus Christi, 33, 39
Costa, Uriel Da, 396
Council of the Four Lands
abolition of, 253, 801, 827
and ban on Sabbateanism, 817
and bankruptcy, 582
jurisdiction of, 238–41
poll tax collection, 597
power of, 809–11
rabbinic leadership in, 610–11, 802–3
tax rate in, 600, 602–3
Council of the Land of Lithuania
abolition of, 253
decisions having rabbinic approval, 802–3
jurisdiction of, 238–41
power of, 809–11
Council of the Land of Moravia, 774
Counter-Reformation, 1064, *See also* Paul IV, Pope; Protestant Reformation
Court Jews. *See also* Oppenheimer, Samuel
and beards, 782
in Germany, 742–3
and Jewish Emancipation, 1065
in the Ottoman Empire, 850
wars and, 154, 770–1, 786–7
crafts
in Italy, 869
in the Ottoman Empire, 854
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 586
Cranz, August, 1076–7
credit instruments, 581–2, *See also* moneylending
Cromwell, Oliver, 952–4
Crusades, 23, 804, 936
crypto-Judaism. *See also judeoconversos*
in Brazil, 973
crisis of classification, 205–7
in England, 950–1
and the Inquisition, 211–18
in Iran, 1046–53
and Portuguese *conversos*, 218–23
crypto-Sabbateanism, 878–9
culture. *See also* leisure behavior
of the Ashkenazic Jews, 241–7
in Christian Hebraic literature, 59–61
in the Dutch Republic, 907–9
and the Haskalah, 1102–5
and *ḥevrot*, 186–8
and the importance of cemeteries, 189
and *judeoconversos'* identity, 208–10
in the Ottoman Empire, 105–8
popularizing the Zohar, 444–7
Sephardic influences on, 84, 104–5
and sin interpretation, 677–83
and stereotypes, 160–2, 958–9, 997–9
and the Yiddish language, 287–9
Cum nimis absurdum (Papal Bull), 31–3, 34, 1064

Curaçao
  plantations in, 991
  privileges in, 985–8
  settlements in, 975–7, 980
currency exchange
  in Germany, 743
  in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 582
Curtin, Phillip, 1066
customs. *See* culture

Dabistan, 1036
D'Arco, Giovan Battista Gherardo, 887
Dark Ages (Jewish), 29, 1090
David ibn Abi Zimra, 1028, 1043–4
deconfessionalization
  and Ezekiel Landau, 777
  and Jewish citizenship, 19–20
Decree of the Headgear (1666), 1024
Delancey, Abigail, 1006
Delancey, Oliver, 1006
Delmedigo, Joseph, 531, 539
demographic change, Jewish. *See also sürgün* policy
  eastern European, 229–33
  Habsburg, 764–9
  migration between early modern states, 146–8
  necessitating new legislation categories, 174
  Ottoman, 77–81, 83–4, 833–7, 1023–6
  Polish–Lithuanian, 132–3, 147–8, 227–9, 230–2, 235–6, 801
  regulation because of taxation, 181–2
  Russian, 233–4
devshirme system, 91, *See also* Ottoman Empire
dhimma. *See* protected subjects, Jews as
diamond trade, 153, 160
dictionaries, 334–5
Diena, Azriel, 684–5
discipline
  in the Papal Inquisition, 34–5
  in the Sephardic Jewish community, 400–5
disease
  Jews accused of causing, 29, 43, 140
  and segregation of Jews, 840
dogs
  conversos described as, 205
  image of Jews as, 20–1, 26
Dohm, Christian Wilhelm von, 661, 665, 812, 1073–6
Dönme, the, 516–17
Dov Ber of Linitz, 629
Dov Ber of Mezerich (the Magid)
  circle of, 633–5
  and Hasidism, 633–5, 638, 648
  life of, 778
  Magid Devarav Le-Ya'akov: Likutei Amarim, 647
  on pride in Jewish separation from others, 784
dowry money, 877
Dubno, Solomon, 662
Dubnow, Simon, 2, 1062, 1105
Duns Scotus, 28
Dutch Republic
  in the Batavian-French period, 919–21
  and conquest of Brazil, 972–4
  conversions and conversion policies, 915–16
  cordial relationship between Jews and Christians in the, 903–7
  culture in the, 907–9
  effect of French Revolution on, 894–6
  Golden Age of the, 153, 1044, 1101
  Hebrew Republic as political model in the, 342
  Jewish Emancipation in the, 918–19
  nationalist politics, 916–18
  Orange, House of, 916–19
  religious education in the, 912–15
  toleration of Jews in the, 68–70
  voluntary Jewish communal membership in the, 403–4
  written languages in the, 909–12
Dweck, Yaacob, 455

eastern Europe. *See also va'adim*; western Europe
  art in, 707–8
  and the decentralization of government, 234–41
  education in, 414
  and Frankism, 618–19
  German language in, 802
  Hasidism in, 254–5, 486–8
  Kabbalah influences in, 465–71, 611–16
  and messianism, 617–19
  music in, 729–30
  and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 250–4
  population increase in, 229–33
  religious devotion in, 607–23
Ebreo, Leone, 1100
Eck, Johann, 54
economic activity. *See also* manorial economy; *membrany*; merchant class; moneylending; port Jews; trade
  and Catholic doctrine, 29–31
  differences between Iberian Jews and New Christians, 207–8
  early modern market practices, 155–62
  in Iran, 1053–4

in Italy, 867–72
market practices, 160–2
New Christian, 219–23
in the Ottoman Empire
international trade, 851–3
Jewish economic culture, 98–105, 841–2, 850
rivalry with Christians, 148–51, 840
philosemitic mercantilism, 146–55
and the Protestant Reformation, 33
and rabbinic culture, 369–73
and transition from moneylending to commerce, 140–6
in Yemen, 1025
economic activity in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth
agricultural, 588–95
and competition/cooperation with non-Jews, 586–7, 822–3
and the European Enlightenment, 600–4
international markets, 587–8
local markets, 579–81, 582–3, 585–6, 823–4
regional trade strategies, 581–3
war leading to economic destruction, 584
Edict of Toleration
Galicia (1789), 792
goals of, 419
granting cultural and religious freedoms, 784, 1073
and Polish Partitions, 828
under Joseph II, 789
education. *See also ḥeder*; *pilpul*; tutors; *yeshivot*
and the Bible, 260–2
in central and eastern Europe, 414
children's, 188–9
in the Dutch Republic, 906, 912–15
and gender, 411–15, 420–2, 858–9
in Germany, 658–60
in the Habsburg Empire, 790–1
and the invention of printing, 244–5
in Italy, 411–15
moral, 613–16
normal schools, 790–1, 888
in the Ottoman Empire, 409–11
of the poor, 959–60
scholarly idealization of, 408–9
study houses, 815–16
Talmudic, 246–7
use of Yiddish in, 284–5
and the Zohar, 445–6
educational reforms, 417–20
Eibeschütz, Jonathan, 753–4, 776, 930, 933
Eibeschütz, Wolf, 517
Eidlitz, Zerah, 427, 429
Eisenmenger, Johann Andreas, 71, 1065
Eisenstadt, Mordecai, 512
elections
in the Habsburg empire, 792
in Jewish communities, 176, 237
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 805
Elimelekh of Lizhensk, 643
elites (Jewish). *See also* lay culture
Kabbalah, influences on, 616
and manuscript decoration, 301–4
in North America, 1004–7
in Poland, 248, 592
and lay leadership, 610–11
and religious decline in the Habsburg Empire, 780–5
Elizabeth I, English Queen, 951, 999
Emancipation, Jewish. *See also* citizenship; civic equality; Enlightenment, the; legal status, of Jews
and early modernity, 1099–101
effect in the Caribbean, 994
effect on the Dutch Republic, 896–7
effect on relations with Protestants, 72–3
historiography of, 1058–64
and Italian emancipation, 886–92
Protestant–Jewish relationships prior to, 72–3
and the rise of toleration, 1068–77
and social integration, 1064–8
in western Europe, 1077–83
Emden, Jacob, 518, 753–4
Endelman, Todd, 1062
Engel, David, 1059
England
Ashkenazic Jews in, 957–60
community organization in, 966–9
diamond trade, 153
early Enlightenment philosophy in, 1068–9
Jewish resettlement, 949–54
legal rights of Jews in, 961–5
Ottoman trade with, 851–3
provincial Jews in, 960–1
Spanish and Portuguese Jews in, 954–7
enlightened absolutism
in France, 938–9
in the Habsburg Empire, 789–92, 1072–3
in Italy, 886–7
Enlightenment, the. *See also* Emancipation, Jewish; Haskalah
acculturation and integration, 1063–8

Enlightenment, the (cont.)
and German Jewry, 760–1, 1070–7, 1081–3
language education in, 655–60
and *maskilim*, 671–3
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 600–4
and rabbinic culture, 669–73
and the study of Jewish history, 72–3
Ephraim of Luntshitz, 608, 612, 613
Equiano, Olaudah, 1031
Erasmus of Rotterdam, 316–17, 320–1
Ergas, Joseph, 879
Eskeles, Henrika, 784
Espina, Alonso de, 205
Esther scrolls, 707–10
Ethiopian Jewry, 1026–9, *See also ayhud*
ethnic relations
in Cochin, 1042–4
and the Iberian Inquisitions, 214
in Jewish communities, 191–4
and North American Jews, 1007–9
in the Ottoman Empire, 834–5
and port Jews, 556–9
and rabbinic culture, 372–3
Ettinger, Shmuel, 552, 1059
Euchel, Isaac, 564, 657, 1105
excommunication, 128–9, 351, 401–5, 636, 857, *See also* community organization; *kahal*
exiles
and Jewish mysticism, 437
megorashim, 440–2
and the *Shekhinah*, 458–61
exorcisms
in the Habsburg Empire, 778
and Lurianic Kabbalah, 483
expulsions of Jews. *See also* antisemitism
in the Caribbean, 987
in Galicia, 791
in Germany, 746
and humanism, 27–31
and the Kabbalah, 437
during the Papal Inquisition, 35
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 580
proposed in North America, 1017–18
from Vienna, 750
from Yemen, 1025
Eybeschütz, Jonathan, 427, 429
Eymeric, Nicholas, 25
Ezra, Joseph ibn, 182

false receipts affair (1778–9), 1077
Familiants Law (1726–7), 304, 769, 787, 790
fear of Jews. *See also* antisemitism
and expulsions in Europe, 24
and forced baptism, 26–7
in the Habsburg court, 785–6
and humanism, 27–31
during the Protestant Reformation, 16
Federalism (North American), 1014–15, 1016–19
Feiner, Shmuel, 1102–5
Fenno, John, 1017–18
Ferdinand III, Holy Roman Emperor, 730
Ferrara Bible, 260–1
Ficino, Marsilio, 322
Figo, Azariah, 426, 530
fires, 839, 849
Florentin, Solomon, 502, 843
Foa, Mosè Beniamino, 882
Formiggini, Moisè, 888
Forster, Johannes, 335
Four-Year Sejm (1788–92), 602, 801, 812, 1083
France. *See also* French Revolution
civil law in, 930–1
effects of the French Revolution on, 1077–9
emancipatory legislation in, 758
Enlightenment in, 936–45, 1069–70
Italian Jewish sympathy for rule of, 888–91
Jewish civil equality in, 751
lay leadership in, 931–2
merchant relations in, 925–6
New Christians in, 141–2
Ottoman trade with, 851–3
population distribution in, 924–5
rabbinic law in, 374, 932–4
regional variance in community organization, 928–30
religious devotion in, 934–6
secularization of, 20
segregation in, 926–7
Francis I, French king, 793
Fränckel, David, 431–2
Frank, Jacob, 618–19, 755–6, 776, 800, 819
Frankism. *See also* messianism
in Germany, 755–6
in the Habsburg Empire, 776
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 800
as threat to eastern European religious tradition, 618–19
Franklin, Benjamin, 1010
Franks, David, 1011
Franks, Jacob, 1006, 1008

fraternities
in the *kahal*, 806–7
in North America, 1004, 1016
Frederick II, King of Prussia, 1071–2, 1099
Freemasons, 38
Freischule, jüdische (Berlin), 419
French Revolution. *See also* France
effect on western Europe, 1077–85
and Jewish Emancipation, 812, 827
and Jewish modernity, 6
and reformist expectancy, 1060
Friedländer, David, 419, 671–2, 1082
Frizzi, Benedetto, 888

Galatino, Pietro Colonna, 319
Gans, David
Neḥmad ve-na'im, 617
on reason, 536–7, 539
on the scientific revolution, 538
Gaon of Vilna (Elijah ben Solomon Zalman)
and Chaim ben Isaak of Volozhin, 820
on Hasidim rejection, 636–8
and *hilkheta ke-vatra' ei*, 361
influence on *Emek ha-Melekh*, 469
and *pilpul*, 369
on the rejection of science, 542
Gaunse, Joachim, 997–9
gender
and access to the Talmud, 247
and access to the Zohar, 468
clear distinctions in Ashkenazic communities, 241
and education, 411–15, 420–2, 858–9
and Hasidism, 646
and moral education, 613–16
and music, 721–2
mystics, 484–6
and regional trade, 582
and tavern keeping, 590
George II, British king, 430
George III, British king, 430, 966
German Jewry. *See also* Ashkenazic Jews
in Berlin, 751
civic rights of, 751
Court Jews, 742–3
dissolution of autonomy, 737–9
economic activity, 587–8
education of, 419, 421–2, 658–60
emancipation legislation attempts, 758–9
and the Enlightenment, 760–1, 1070–7, 1081–3
Fettmilch episode, 745–6
music, 726–8
noblemen in charge of, 740, 744–5
population increase, 742
and the Protestant Reformation, 50–6, 61–4, 661–2, 746
social status of, 749–50
German Jews and religion
changing Enlightenment religious attitudes, 669–73, 743–4
and disregard for traditional rituals, 740
and Frankism, 755–6
and Halakhah, 756–61
and Hasidism, 756
and Sabbatean mysticism, 749, 752–4
German language
as local vernacular in eastern Europe, 802
taught in the Habsburg Empire, 784–5, 790, 1073
Gershon, Ephraim ben, 105
ghetto, Jewish. *See also* poverty
in England, 958–60
in France, 926–7
in the Habsburg Empire, 769
in Italy, 15, 20–1, 31–8, 872–7, 888
lack of kosher wine in, 696
during the Papal Inquisition, 31–8, 1064
ritual baths in, 688–9
Ginzburg, Carlo, 217
Gitlitz, David, 208
Gladwell, Malcolm, 496
Glückel of Hameln, 154, 421–2, 778
Gobat, Samuel, 1029
Goldberg, Arnold, 268
Goldish, Matt, 508
Gorsky, Philip, 400
Graetz, Heinrich, 2, 318, 505, 1058, 1090
Gratz, Rebecca, 999
gravesites. *See* cemeteries
Greek language, 835
Grégoire, Abbé Henri, 937–8, 1078
Gregory I the Great, Pope
conversion policies of, 33
Jewish citizenship under, 23
Grevenbroek, Gulielmus, 1033
Griselini, Francesco, 306
Grotius, Hugo, 902
guilds
in early modern Europe, 142
exclusion of Jews from, 580
and the Fettmilch episode in Germany, 745–6
and *ḥevrot*, 185–8
in the Ottoman Empire, 93, 854

guilds (cont.)
of teachers, 415–16
Gumpertz, Aaron Salomon, 542, 1071–2

Habsburg Jewry
community organization, 771–5
demographics
closed migration system of, 765–7
population increase, 765
settlement distribution, 767–9
territorial acquisitions, impact of, 764–5
during the reign of Joseph II, 789–92
economic activity, 769–71
Halakhah and mysticism in, 775–80
in Italy, 886–92
patriotism of, 792–3
and relations with royalty, 785–9
secularization of, 780–5
self-identification of, 793–4
yeshivot in, 773
Hacker, Joseph R., 1092
haggadah, 707
Hagiz, Moses, 518, 703, 879
Halakhah. *See also Shulḥan Arukh*; Talmud
and civil law adherence, 353–5
in the Dutch Republic, 914
and education, 855
and Jewish legal autonomy
affecting devotion to, 607–23
and challenge of science, 539–40
and Christian courts, 121–8, 144–5, 363–5
and civil law, 374–6
in early modern courts, 127–8
in France, 932–4
in the Habsburg Empire, 791
in Italy, 33
on Jewish status, 202–3
in the Ottoman Empire, 84–8
during the Papal Inquisition, 43
ritual bathing, 683–91
Sabbatai Zevi's transgressions, 493–504
social relations, 590–1, 744–5
talmudic principles, 170–4
and Karaism, 399–400
and the Talmud, 361, 368–9
posekim, 353, 361, 370–2, 374–6
printing, impact of, 358–9
relaxing of strictures in economic matters, 372–3
Halevi, Avraham, 835
Halevi, Elijah, 105
Halevi, Joseph ben Isaac, 537
Halevi, Judah, 336, 858
Hallelyah, Mehalalel, 502
Ha-Me'asef (journal), 657–60
Hamilton, Alexander, 1016
Hamilton, William, 1011
Hanlon, Gregory, 378
Hannover, Nathan, 245–6, 408–9, 607–8, 799
Hardenberg, Karl August von, 782
Hart, Aaron, 966
Ḥasid, Judah, 515
Hasidim
centered on the *bet midrash*, 632–3
circles of, 628–31
in Germany, 756
opposition to, 636–7
tzaddik, relationship to, 644–6
Hasidism. *See also ba'alei shem*; *mitnagdim*
community organization, 488
geographic expansion of, 639–44
Habad, 642
and Hasidim, 628–31, 636–9
and modernization, 649–50
and the institutionalism of mysticism, 619–21
intellectuals of, 646–8
magic in, 486–8
maturation of, 644–6
in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire, 488–9
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 800, 801, 807, 826–8
Shivḥei ha-Ari, 488
Shivḥei ha-Besht, 488, 631, 640
Haskalah. *See also* Enlightenment, the; *maskilim*; Mendelssohn, Moses
and changing religious attitudes, 669–73
early, 1102–4
German Jewish origin of, 743–4
historiographic observations of, 652–5
and Jewish civil integration, 665–9
and Jewish Emancipation, 1100–1
and Jewish tradition, 621–3
and language education, 655–60
and philosophy and scientific thought, 540–3
and port Jews, 557–60, 564
and relationship with Jewish culture, 1102–5
Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom, 658–60
haskamot, 171
Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Zayyati (Leo Africanus), 1030
Ḥatam Sofer. *See* Sofer, Moses
Haykl, Ḥayim, 643

Ḥayon, Neḥemiah, 879
Ḥayyat, Yehudah, 440, 448–52
Hebraica Veritas, 328
Hebrew language
  abbreviation, keys to, 335
  after the Thirty Years' War, 70–2
  associated with Southern African languages, 1033
  dictionaries, 334–5
  in the Dutch Republic, 909–12
  in eastern European rabbinic texts, 609–10
  education in the Enlightenment, 655–60
  grammars, 333–4, 418, 882
  importance of in Protestant studies, 59–61
  in Italy, 455, 524–7
  Jewish commentators on, 327–9
  in the Ottoman Empire, 262–4, 860
Hebrew Republic, 341
ḥeder. *See also* education; *yeshivot*
  primary education for children, 415
  and social segregation, 613
  teacher qualifications in the, 415–16
Heine, Heinrich, 1061
Heller, Yom Tov Lippman, 537, 539, 617
Henri II, French king, 925
Henri III, French king, 931
Henri IV, French king, 925
ḥerem. *See* excommunication
heresy
  Hasidim suspected of, 636–7
  heterodoxy (Sephardic), 393–400
  parading in Blessed Sacks, 216
  Sabbatean mysticism as form of, 817
  in the Sephardic community, 396–8
Hertzberg, Arthur, 680, 936, 1059
Heschel, Abraham Joshuah, 607–8, 621
ḥevra kadisha. *See* burial society
ḥevrot. *See* community organization
Hillel Ba'al Shem, 625–6
historiography, Jewish
  ambivalence before Enlightenment, 72–3
  challenges of, 1089–93
  descriptive markers for, 1093–8
  importance of in Protestant studies, 62–4
  organization of early modern, 7–8
Hohburg, Christian, 63
Holy Roman Empire
  Familiants Law, 304
  Jewish and Christian court system in, 128
  Jewish community organization in, 128–31
  Jewish legal rights in, 114–21
  tax collection in, 184
homiletics
  critiques of literature in, 427–8
  delivered in vernacular languages, 423
  kabbalistic material in, 425, 456
  mystical traditions in, 426
  philosophical teachings in, 423–5
  in public venues, 428–33
  spectrum of people delivering, 422–3
  on standards of moral behavior, 426–7
Horowitz, Abraham, 537
Horowitz, Isaiah, 467, 615, 691–3
Horowitz, Shabetai Sheftel, 470
Howe, William, 1011
Hubmaier, Balthasar, 55
Huli, Jacob, 267–8, 271, 857
humanism
  and Catholic attitudes toward Jews, 27–31
  and Christian Hebraism, 316–21
  and the Hebrew Bible, 325–6
  importance of Hebrew for, 339–40
  promulgating a fear of Jews during the Protestant Reformation, 16–17
Hundert, Gershon D, 1092
Hurwitz, Zalkind, 821
Huss, Boaz, 445

Iberia. *See also* Spain
  migration approval from Ottoman rulers, 79–81
  migration patterns in, 77–9, 104–5
  Sephardic Jews in, 83–4, 94
Iberian Inquisitions. *See also* burning at the stake; Papal Inquisition
  archival secrecy of the, 214–15
  Holy Offices of, 210–14
  and Kabbalah, 437
  and migration to Africa and Asia, 1023
  and migration to India, 1034
  and migration to the New World, 990–1
  Portuguese New Christians, 218–23
  social separation and conflation, 202–10
Ibero-Romance languages, 257–9
Idel, Moshe, 449–51, 506–7
immortality of the soul
  and the Lurianic Kabbalah, 462–3
  and the Sephardic Jews, 395–7
Indian Jewry
  Bene Israel and, 1038–42
  Cochin, 1042–4
  settlement patterns, 1034–8
  and Yemenite Jews, 1025
infections. *See* disease

Innocent III, Pope
Christian purity, 23
controlling the Jews under, 40
Inquisition. *See* Iberian Inquisitions; Papal Inquisition
integration. *See also* acculturation
in the Enlightenment, 1064–8
into European economy, 576–9
and European high culture, 667–9
of Jews in England, 965
intellectuals
in England, 967–9
and fear of Jews during the Protestant Reformation, 16–17
importance of Hebrew to, 339–40
in Iran, 1055
and *kloyzen*, 470
in the Ottoman Empire, 94, 99, 103, 105–8
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 242–3, 820–1
secondary, 284–5
and secular material, 524
international trade. *See* economic activity; trade
Iranian Jewry
eastern migrations of, 1036
economic activity, 1053–4
historical overview of, 1046–53
literature, 1054–5
music, 1056
Isaac, Johannes and Stephen, 64
Israel, Jonathan I.
Diasporas Within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires, 554
on economic stagnation of Italian Jews, 864
European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750, 2, 3–5, 554
on modern Jewish society, 1089–91
Isserlein, Israel, 686–7
Isserles, Moses
astronomy studies, 617
on drinking wine with gentiles, 681
ha-Mapa, 610
and Joseph Karo, 360–3
and the Kabbalah movement, 535–6
on ritual bathing, 688–9
Torat Ḥatat, 610
Istanbul. *See also* Constantinople
community organization, 86–7
economic activity, 98–9
expulsion of Jews from, 81–2
Jewish leadership in, 95
Italia, Salom, 305
Italian Jewry
and the Catholic Church, 883–6
economic activity, 867–72
education, 411–15, 880–2
emancipation attempts, 886–92
gius gazagà and tenancy rights, 877
humanist attitudes toward Jews in, 27–31
Kabbalah and mysticism in, 322–5, 447–57, 878–9
multiethnicity, 865
musical traditions, 724–6
philosophy and science, 529–32
population distribution, 140–1, 865
and port Jews, 556–7
printing, 295–7, 524–7
Viva Maria riots (1799), 889

Jacob ben Asher, 857
Jacob ben Naftali, 454
Jaffe, Mordecai, 537, 617
James II, English king, 954, 1001
Jefferson, Thomas, 44
Jerome
Erasmus dialogue, 316–17
studying with Jewish teachers, 328
Jerusalem, 665–9, 1077
"Jew Bill" (England), 962–4, 1067
Jewry laws, 172–4, 1071–2
Joselewicz, Berek, 812
Joseph, Jacob, 639–40
Joseph II, Habsburg Emperor
Edict of Toleration, 784, 1073
and enlightened absolutism, 785, 789–92, 827
reforms of, 811
Judah Loew ben Bezalel (the Maharel of Prague)
on acceptance of science, 537
on differences between Jews and gentiles, 381
on education system, 417–19
on gentile wine, 693–4
Judeo-Arabic language, 835
judeoconversos. *See also conversos*; crypto-Judaism
history of, 207–8
identification of, 216–22
secrecy and Grand Hoax theories, 221–3
social separation and integration, 221–3
Judeo-Persian language, 1054–5
Judeo-Spanish language
printing in, 308–9
and Sephardic Jews, 257, 259–60, 264–5, 835
Juliao, Abraham Henriques, 907

Kabbalah. *See also* Lurianic Kabbalah; mysticism; Sabbatean mysticism
and Christian Hebraism, 322–5
Cordoverian, 466–9, 855–6
Draa Kabbalism, 447
in eastern Europe, 465–71, 611–16
in the Habsburg Empire, 776, 777
and the Iberian expulsion, 437
and interpretation of sin, 677–83
in Italy, 447–52, 531, 878
Naḥalat Tsvi, 468
in North Africa, 439–42
in the Ottoman Empire, 411, 457–61, 855–7
popularity of, 484, 625–8
and rabbinic culture, 364–8
scholarship in, 438–9
taught in *yeshivot*, 814
tikkun, 496–7
Kadizadelis movement, 851
kahal. *See also* autonomy; community organization; excommunication; *kehillah*
autonomy of, 802–3
being helped by noblemen, 248
community in Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 236–8
and Council membership, 810
and fraternities, 806–7
and imbalance with civic community, 808
leadership of, 804–5
Kaplan, Benjamin, 1063
Kaplan, Yosef
Alternative Path to Modernity, 554
and the Haskalah, 1100–1
on assimilation among Jewish and non-Jewish communities, 1066
on Sephardim in Amsterdam, 1092
Karaism, 399–400
Karaites
as Jewish sect, 345
under Ottoman rule, 86, 96–9
Sephardic admiration for, 399–400
sürgün communities, 82
Karl VI, Habsburg Emperor, 787
Karo, Isaac, 424
Karo, Joseph. *See also Shulḥan Arukh*
authority of, 914
magid spirit episode, 509
on ritual bathing, 689–91
Shulḥan Arukh, 359–63, 857, 914
yeshivot, 1024
Karp, Jonathan, 1063
Katz, Jacob
antisemitism and, 964
on Ashkenazic traditions, 617
concept of semi-neutral society, 802
crisis theories, 623
early modern period, 370, 1090
on gentile wine, 693
on the Haskalah, 1100
and Jewish emancipation, 1061
Out of the Ghetto, 1106
and port Jews, 552
on sexual sins, 679
on social integration, 1064
Tradition and Crisis, 2, 370
on traditional society, 779
on *yeshivot*, 417
Katzenellenbogen, Meir, 681, 682
Katznelson, Ira, 1062
kehillah, 171–4, *See also* community organization; *kahal*; *pinkasim*
Khmelnytsky uprising
and *Emek ha-Melekh*, 481
and end of the Golden Age, 799
impact on Jewish communities, 826
and Jewish mass migration, 350, 747–8
and messianism, 816
and the murder of Polish Jews, 936
and Torah study, 607
kidnapping. *See also* conversions and conversion policies
and forced conversion, 26–7, 28
frustration with, 47
and the good of the faith, 36
klezmer music, 729–30
Klooster, Wim, 567
Knorr von Rosenroth, Christian, 71, 324, 481–2
knowledge explosion. *See* literature, Jewish; printing
Kochi. *See* Cochin Jewry
Kohen, Nehemiah, 500
Koidanover, Tsvi Hirsch, 467, 614
Kolb, Peter, 1033
Koopman, De (journal), 894–6
Koselleck, Reinhart, 898–9

Lacretelle, Pierre-Louis, 1077
Ladino language
Chronicle of the Ottoman Sultans, 263
and *conversos* education, 260–2
decline in the seventeenth century, 264–5
print culture in the eighteenth century, 265–70
and women's education, 859

Lampronti, Isaac, 539, 880
Landau, Ezekiel
  eulogies to Habsburg monarchs, 789
  and German language, 785
  and halakhic authority, 775–80
  on Jews, 793
  for Maria Theresa eulogy, 430–1
  and public sermons, 433
  on sin, 679
L'Armatura dei forti, 42
Latin language, 335–7
Latin Vulgate, 261, 325, 329, 332, 343
Latour-Foissac, Philippe-François, 1077
Lattes, Isaac de, 453
Lavi, Shimon, 442–4
law. *See also* autonomy; *posekim*; *Shulḥan Arukh*
  European
    Familiants, 304
    and humanist attitudes toward Jews, 27–31
  housing, 101–2
    Shulḥan Arukh, 359–63
  Jewish
    clashing with local custom, 363–5
    community ordinances civic rather than religious, 171–2
lay culture. *See also* elites; leadership, communal
  birth of, 287–9
  in France, 931–2
  in Italian ghettos, 875–6
  and the Kabbalah, 627
  in Ottoman Empire, 847–8
  and rabbinic culture, 372–3
  and wealthy families, 610–11
leadership, communal. *See also* lay culture; rabbis
  in the *kahal*, 804–5
  in the Ottoman Empire, 94–7
  in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 804–5, 806–7
  in Sephardic communities, 382–4, 386–9
leaseholding
  general *arenda*, 594
  in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 588–9, 592–4, 804
  tensions with rabbinic law, 590–1
Lefin, Mendel, 622, 821
legal reformulations
  from collective to individual responsibility, 143–4
  during the Iberian Inquisitions, 211–18
  to neutralize imagined Jewish aggression during the Protestant Reformation, 17
  transfer away from religious to secular courts, 145–6
legal status, of Jews. *See also* citizenship; Emancipation, Jewish
  differing timelines for, 113–14
  in England, 961–5
  in the Holy Roman Empire, 114–21
  individual, 182–3
  in Italy, 874–5
  ius commune, 43–4, 46, 355–6
  ius proprium, 355–6
  in North America, 1001, 1014–15
  in the Ottoman Empire, 86–8
  and talmudic principles, 171–4
Lehmann, Matthias, 569
leisure behavior. *See also* culture
  in the Dutch Republic, 908
  in France, 932
  in homiletic literature, 427
Leo Africanus, 1030
Leon, Michael Judah, 298
Leopold II, Holy Roman Emperor, 888
Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, 1070
Levi, David, 968
Levi, Solomon, 424
Levi Isaac of Berdichev, 640–1
Levine, Hillel, 519
Levison, Georg, 542
Levita, Elijah, 331
Levy, Andrew, 1006
Levy, Asser, 999–1000
Lichtenberg, Georg Christoph, 73
Lightfoot, John, 321–2
Lindo, Moses, 1002
Lipschitz, Salomom ben Moses, 727–8
literature, Jewish. *See also* books; *musar*; poetry, Jewish
  before emancipation, 72–3
  in the Dutch Republic, 908–12
  critiqued in homilies, 427–8
  eastern European Jewish, 608–11
  fear of, 24
  of Hasidism, 646–8
  in Iran, 1054–5
  in the Ladino language, 260–5
  Kabbalah, 452–7, 815–16
  and North African Kabbalah, 440–2
  in the Ottoman Empire, 105–8, 857–8
  popularization of, 270–1, 611–12
  and rabbinic culture, 29, 357–63
  reflecting reduced tensions after the Thirty Years' War, 70–2
  spread due to the invention of printing, 244–5

liturgy, Jewish. *See also* poetry, Jewish; *tkhines*
poetry as, 696, 714, 730, 936
prayer books as
French, 934–5
kabbalistic, 456
Lurianic kabbalistic, 470–1
Locke, John, 1069
London
Ashkenazic Jews in, 957–60
Jewish Emancipation in, 1065
Jewish resettlement in, 949–54
as mother community for Caribbean Jews, 979–80
secularization in, 966–7
Spanish and Portuguese Jews in, 954–7
Lonzano, Menaḥem, 731
Lopez, Aaron, 1004–6
Louis XI, French king, 924
Louis XIII, French king, 925
Louis XIV, French king, 69, 925, 987
Louis XV, French king, 925–6
Louis XVI, French king, 931, 938
Louis Philippe, French king, 941
Luntshitz, Ephraim, 537, *See* Ephraim of Luntshitz
Luria, Isaac, 451, 461–5, 478–83, 688–9
Luria, Solomon, 610
Lurianic Kabbalah. *See also* Kabbalah
development of, 461–5
in eastern Europe, 469–71
in Italy, 451–2
and *kloyzen* (conventicles), 470, 628–9
and magic, 478–83
in the Ottoman Empire, 856–7
practices of, 616
and Sabbatean mysticism, 495–506
theology of, 366–7
yihudim, 463
Luther, Martin
anti-Jewish writings of, 55–6
attitude toward Jews, 15, 51–2
and differences with John Calvin, 56–8
on Jews as chosen people, 50
and the Nazi movement, 50–1
and religious sectarianism, 747
Lutheranism. *See also* Protestant Reformation
antisemitism in, 55–6, 66–8
importance of Jewish history to, 62–4
Lutzker, Solomon, 647–8
Luzzatto, Moses, 878–9
Luzzatto, Simone, 161, 245

Machado, David, 983
madness (mental illness)
and kabbalistic rituals, 616
in the Sabbatean movement, 493–504, 510
magic
and exorcisms, 483–4
in Hasidism, 486–8
and Lurianic Kabbalah, 478–83
in music, 725
in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire, 488–9
not considered supernatural, 475–7
women performing, 484–6
magid, 487–8, 512–13, 879
Magid, the. *See* Dov Ber of Mezerich
Magriso, Isaac, 267–8
mahamad (Sephardic council of elders)
and excommunication, 402
as a key community organization, 87
in the Ottoman Empire, 847
and rabbinic authority, 386–9
and Sephardic communities, 384–6
Maharal of Prague. *See* Judah Loew ben Bezalel
Mahler, Raphael, 1059
Maimon, Solomon
on Hasidic movement, 487
on the Haskalah, 622
on the maskilic program, 672, 821
on practical Kabbalah, 628
Maimonides, Moses
Guide of the Perplexed, 537
Mishneh Torah, 857
on the reconciliation of Judaism and reason, 523, 527, 616
Malakh, Ḥayyim, 514
manorial economy. *See also* economic activity
and leaseholding, 590–4
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 588–90, 804, 822
squeezing of Jews by landowners, 597–8
manuscripts
beautification of, 301–4, 706–8
and books, definition, 293–4
Iranian, 1056
non-Hebrew Jewish, 309–10
tradition of, 297–308
Marcaria, Jacob, 526
Margaritha, Anton, 59–60
Maria Theresa, Habsburg Empress
expulsion of Jews, 787–9
Jewish regulations of, 783

Maria Theresa, Habsburg Empress (cont.)
leaving Jewish autonomy alone, 774
Toleration Tax, 789
Marlowe, Christopher, 949
Martí, Ramon, 25
maskilim. *See also* Haskalah
Enlightenment writings of, 671–3
ḥakham kolel concept, 1102–4
and secularization, 743–4
spreading the message of the Haskalah, 758
Medici, Paolo, 885
medicine. *See also* physicians
interwoven with natural philosophy, 522–4
Italian education in, 880
vernacularization of, 543–5
Medina, Samuel de, 371
Mediterranean
Jewish roles in the trading diaspora, 148–51
mass migration to following the Black Death, 77–9
megorashim. *See* exiles
Mehmed II, Ottoman Sultan
growth of intellectuals under, 105
Jewish leadership under, 95
Meir ben Ephraim, 454
Melammed, Siman Tov, 1055
Melanchthon, Philip, 56
membrany, 371–2, *See also* economic activity; moneylending
Menaḥem Naḥum of Chernobyl (Reb Naḥum), 640
Menasseh ben Israel
Hebrew writings, 297–8
The Hope of Israel, 952, 982, 1022
and Jewish resettlement in England, 952–3
and the Lost Tribes of Israel, 1023
and messianism, 981–2
and the rabbinical ban, 1077
and Spinoza, 483
Vindiciae Judaeorum, 1077
Mendelssohn, Moses. *See also* Haskalah
Alim Litrufah, 662
and civic equality, 665–9, 812
and Jewish Emancipation, 1099
and the Halakhah, 756–7, 1074
and the Hebrew language, 655–6
Lesebuch für jüdischer Kinder, 419
rationalist approach of, 621–3
Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom, 662–5, 752–3
Vindiciae Judaeorum, 1077
and the Wessely affair, 1076–7
merchant class. *See also* economic activity; port Jews
in England, 950–1
in France, 925–6
in Italy, 869–70
and the Jew Bill, 962–4
in North America, 1004–7
in the Ottoman Empire, 842
Sephardic Jewish, 142–3
Mercury (Roman God), 563
Messer Leon, Judah, 1104
messianism. *See also* Frankism; Sabbatean movement
in the Caribbean, 980–4
in the Dutch Republic, 913
in England, 952–3
in Iran, 1050
and Jewish longing, 491–3, 508
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 807, 816–17
popularity of, 627
Sabbatai Zevi, 493–504
as threat to eastern European religious tradition, 617–19
and Zionism, 519
metalwork
in Italy, 869
in the Ottoman Empire, 101, 854
in Yemen, 1025
metoposcopy, 463
Meyer, Michael A., 6–7
Michaelis, Johann David, 1075–6
middle minority theory, 578
midnight vigil ritual, 460
migration
affecting rabbinic culture, 350–2
to Brazil, 972–4
and the Dutch Republic, 900–2, 920
to eastern Europe following the Black Death, 77–9
between European states, 146–8
and music, 719
in the Ottoman Empire, 101–2, 104–5
and spread of Yiddish, 280–1
sürgün policy, 81–3, 845
mikveh, 190, 683–91, 873
Milano, Attilio, 864
military
conscription in the, 1009
Jews enrolling in the Dutch, 906–7
provisioning the, 1006–7
millennial expectations
and conversion policies, 31
and the end of the world, 52
minhagim, 364–5

Minz, Judah, 686
Miranda, Isaac, 1001
Mithridates, Flavius, 322
mitnagdim, 621, 637–8, 642–3, 820, *See also* Hasidism
mitzvot, 463, 668
mobility. *See* integration; migration
Modena, Leone
  on gentile wine, 696, 699–700
  Historia dei Riti Ebraici, 885
  and Kabbalah, 455
  life of, 413
modernization
  and Hasidism, 649–50
  slow pace of, 940–1, 944–5
Molcho, Solomon, 411
moneylending. *See also* credit instruments; economic activity; *membrany*
  and Calvinism, 57
  differences in the Christian and Ottoman Empires, 100
  in Italy, 869
  and Jewish suitability for citizenship, 941
  loans, 598–600
  to non-Jews, 822–3
  in the Ottoman Empire, 841, 854
  and transition to commerce, 141–2
Monte, Anna del, 46–7
Montezinos, Antonio, 981
morals. *See also* religious devotion
  eastern European, 611–16
  in homiletic literature, 426
Morocco, 439–42
Morpurgo, Elia, 888
Moscato, Judah, 425
Muchachon, Elijah, 502
Muhammad Beg, 1048–9
Muhlenberg, Henry Melchior, 1010–11
Münster, Anabaptist Kingdom of, 53–4
Münster, Sebastian, 328–9
musar. *See also* literature, Jewish
  as mass instruction in print, 611–12
  men's, 614–15
  movement, 820
  women's, 613
music, Jewish
  in Amsterdam, 728–9
  cantors, 726–8
  in the Dutch Republic, 908
  in eastern Europe, 729–30
  in Germany, 726–8
  in Iran, 1056
  in Italy, 724–6
  literary sources for, 722–3
  in the Ottoman Empire, 730–1, 859
  performative contexts, 719
  sacred–secular opposition, 723
  sound of, 720
  women and, 721–2
Muslim lands
  conversions and conversion policies, 842–3
  copying print books by hand in, 307–8
  fundamentalism in, 850–1
  Islamic court system, 90
  Jewish autonomy in, 234
  Jewish education in, 409–11
  Jews caught between Islamic factions, 1046–52
  Kaballah in, 439–42
  legal approach to Jews in, 113–14, 192, 193
  mass migration to following the Black Death, 77–9
  and taxation of Jews for protection, 180
mysticism. *See also* Kabbalah
  Christian, 322–5
  Jewish
    ba'alei shem, 615–16
    hasidim, 628–31
    and Hasidism, 619–21, 648
    in homiletics, 426
    Naḥalat Tsvi, 467
    and rabbinic culture, 364–8
    and the Yiddish language, 285–7
  Muslim, 411, 857
  tikkun, 496–7

Nação
  influencing the *mahamad*'s actions, 391
  prohibition of libel, 392
  and secular elite, 383
  and Sephardic identity, 403–4
Nadir Shah, 1051–3
Naḥman of Bratzlav, 644
Najara, Israel, 730
Napoleon Bonaparte
  and the "infamous decree", 943–4
  and Jewish Emancipation, 890–1, 941–3, 1079–81
  and Jewish ghettos, 35
Naumbourg, Samuel, 724
Navigation Act (1651), 953, 990
Nazi movement, 50–1
New Christians
  economic practices, 160–2
  emigration to Amsterdam, 146–7
  in England, 949–57

New Christians (cont.)
in France, 141–2, 924–5
in India, 1034–5
Italian, 885
Portuguese, 218–23
trading diaspora of, 155–60
transoceanic expansion of, 151–2
New Institutional Economic Theory, 578
New Russia. *See* Russia
New World. *See also* North American Jewry
messianism and the, 980–4
parnasim supervising Jews in, 979
Nicholas III, Pope, 25
Nieto, David, 968
Nieto, Isaac, 430
Nievo, Alexander de, 17
nobility
confessionalism and, 379–80
and estate income, 592–4
and German Jewry, 740, 744–5
owning Polish towns, 233, 583–4
Noda bi-Yehudah. *See* Landau, Ezekiel
North, Douglass, 578
North Africa. *See also* African Jewry
community organization in, 85
Hasidism in, 488–9
Jewish emigration to, 837
Judeo-Arabic language in, 835
Kabbalah in, 439–42
mass migration to following the Black Death, 77–9
medieval Jewish governance in, 170–4
popularization of the Zohar, 444–7
North American Jewry. *See also* New World
and the American Revolutionary War, 1009–13
antisemitism toward, 1013–19
elite Jews, 1004–7
ethnic divide within, 1007–9
first arrivals, 999–1004
stereotypes of, 997–9

oaths, 122, 1010–11
Obadiah of Bertinoro, 677
Oberman, Heiko A., 51
Ockers, Willem, 895, 896
Ogren, Brian, 451
Old Christians. *See* Catholic Church; Protestant Reformation
Oppenheimer, Samuel, 786–7, *See also* Court Jews
Osiander, Andreas, 54–5
Ostjuden. *See* Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth
Ottolenghe, Joseph, 1002
Ottoman Empire
housing, 101–2
Jewish cultural and intellectual life
alcohol consumption, 695–6, 840
culture, 105–8
education, 409–11, 854–7, 858–9
ethnic tolerance, 91–3
family structure, 849–50
guilds, 841, 854
lay culture, 847–8
leisure activities, 841
literature, 857–8
music, 730–1, 859
Jewish demographics
emigration to Europe and North Africa, 837
Iberian Jews, 83–4
internal migration, 835–6
migration to following the Black Death, 77–9
sovereign approval of Jewish migration, 79–81
in Yemen, 1023–6
Jewish economic activity
economic culture, 98–105, 841–2, 850
international trade, 851–3
rivalry with Christians, 148–51, 840
Jewish governance. *See also devshirme* system
autonomy, 89
community organization, 84–8, 95–7, 843
leadership, 94–7, 174–5
segregation in, 839–40
Jewish languages
Arabic, 835
and education of *conversos*, 260–4
Greek, 835
Hebrew, 262–4
Ibero-Romance, 257–9
Judeo-Arabic, 835
Judeo-Spanish, 257, 259–60, 835
Ladino, 260–2, 265–70
Turkish as official language, 834, 859–61
Jewish religious practices
challenge to rabbinic tradition, 270–1
conversions and issues, 94, 842–4
Hasidism, 488–9
Kabbalah, 457–61
and Muslim fundamentalism, 850–1
Sabbatean mysticism, 493–504, 843
law
and inferior status of Jews, 838, 848–9
Islamic court system, 90, 842
Jewish legal authority, 846–7

and Jews as protected subjects, 88–94
legal restrictions on Jews, 838
legal view of Jews, 81–3, 93–4
rabbi tax, 92
sürgün policy, 845
Tanzimat Reforms, 832–3

Pagnini, Sanctes, 334
Pale of Settlement, 234, 744, 801, *See also* Russia
Papal Inquisition. *See also* Catholic Church; Iberian Inquisitions
and censorship of Jewish texts, 329
and discipline, 34–5
drive to integrate Jews during the, 43
and "the good of the faith", 36
meaning of Judaism to, 25, 26–7, 216–17
rents during the, 36–7
and ritual murder, 41–2
and segregation, 44
parnasim. *See* autonomy; Sephardic Jews
patriotism
in the American Revolutionary War, 1009–13
in the Dutch Republic, 916–19, 920–1
in France, 940
in the Habsburg Empire, 792–3
reflected in homilies, 431–3
Paul IV, Pope. *See also* Counter-Reformation
conversions and conversion policies of, 31–3
Jewish ghettos and, 26, 1064
Pavini, G. F., 27–8
payment orders, 594
Pelham, Henry, 963
Pentateuch
Bi'ur, the (Moses Mendelssohn), 658–60
Turkish translation of, 859
Pereta, Avner, 265
Pereyra, Abraham, 984
Périz, Manuel Bautista, 151–2
Perlhefter, Issakhar Baer, 511–12
Perlov, Asher, 643
Perpetual Servitude (doctrine), 27–8
Persian Jewry. *See* Iranian Jewry
Pfefferkorn, Johannes, 52
philanthropy (*ḥilluk*), 417
Philip of Hesse, 55
philosemitism, 146–55, 952, 999
philosophy and science, Jewish. *See also* classical philosophy
and antisemitism, 936–8
in Ashkenaz, 533–8
and Haskalah, 540–3
and the invention of printing, 524–7
in Iran, 1055
in Italy, 529–32
migration from Iberia to the Ottoman Empire, 527–9
having religious and secular dichotomy, 522–4
and the Scientific Revolution, 538–40
vernacularization and popularization of, 543–5
physicians. *See also* medicine
and folk healers, 476
North American, 1003
Ottoman, 841
Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni, 322–4
Pietism
and east European Jews, 608–9
magical traditions of, 476–7
piety. *See* Hasidism; religious devotion
pilpul. *See also* education; Talmud
advanced study, 417
commentaries on the Talmud, 814
definition of, 609
in the Ottoman Empire, 855, 856
revolutionary nature of, 368–9
Pinḥas of Koretz, 639–40
pinkasim, 176–9, *See also kehillah*; record-keeping
Pius VI, Pope, 42, 886
Pius IX, Pope
describing Jews as dogs, 20–1
missionary sermons and, 34
plantations, 991
Plumsted, William, 1006
poetry, Jewish. *See also* literature, Jewish; liturgy, Jewish
epic, 657
in Iran, 1056
Ladino language, 265, 269, 859
liturgical, 696, 714, 730, 936
in North Africa, 446
in the Ottoman Empire, 266, 269–71
patriotic, 793
Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth
autonomy in, 802–13, 1083–4
community organization, 595–600
conflict with eastern European states, 250–5
and the European Enlightenment, 600–4
final decades of, 826–9
Golden Age of, 798–9
Jewish culture
education, 408–9
languages, 802

Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (cont.)
lifestyle, 131–5
social status, 612–13
synagogue architecture, 712
Jewish demographics
before the thirteenth century, 227–9
break-up and Jewish population dispersal, 801
colonizing role of Jews, 230–2
immigration, 147–8
royal approval for Jewish settlement, 235–6
Jewish economic activity
agriculture, 588–95
community orientation to commerce, 144
urban markets, 579–88
Khmelnytsky uprising, 799
leadership changes in, 801
and the non-Jewish community, 821–6
religious diversification in, 800
rise of Muscovy, 799–800
va'adim in, 238–41
poll tax collection
in the Ottoman Empire, 849
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 597
Pollack, Jacob, 610
Polyglot Bibles, 330, 332
Poniatowski, Stanislaw August, king of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania
economic reform during the Four-Year Sejm, 601, 603
integration of Jewish cooperative system and the state administrative system, 253
privilegia and, 236
Poppers, Meir, 479–80, 481–2
population distribution, Jewish
in the Caribbean, 973–7
in the Dutch Republic, 900–2
in France, 924–5
in North America, 997–8
port Jews. *See also* economic activity; merchant class
antisemitism toward, 989–90
and the Atlantic, 566–8
Baghdadis, 1036–8
definition of, 550–5
in England, 949–54, 960–1
ethnicity and culture of, 556–66
scholarship on, 568–72
slave trade and, 990–2
Portugal
mass migration to following the Black Death, 79
transoceanic expansion, 151
Portuguese Inquisition. *See* Iberian Inquisitions
posekim, 353, 361, 370–2, 374–6, *See also* law
poverty. *See also* ghetto, Jewish
beggars and, 191, 749–50
in Iran, 1054
in Italy, 871–2
in the Ottoman Empire, 848–9
in the Sephardic communities, 391–3
in Suriname, 988
Prado, Juan de, 397
prayer books
French, 934–5
kabbalistic material in, 456
and Lurianic Kabbalah, 470–1
preachers
popularity of, 611–12
tzaddikim, 619–20, 633–5
printing
and diffusion of Talmud, 244–5
and the dissemination of philosophical knowledge, 524–7, 616–17
Hebrew, 295–7
and Kabbalistic books, 452–7, 484
and rabbinic culture, 357–63, 813–15
and rise of Yiddish culture, 278–81
privileges. *See also* protected subjects, Jews as; social status, Jewish
in the Dutch Republic, 904
in the Ottoman Empire, 833
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 580, 802
Prossnitz, Judah Leib, 514
protected subjects, Jews as. *See also* privileges
economic activity of the, 98–105
in England, 954
in the Holy Roman Empire, 114–21
in the Ottoman Empire, 88–94
taxation of, 180–1
in Yemen, 1023
Protestant Reformation. *See also* Calvinism; Counter-Reformation; Lutheranism; Reformed Church
and the authority of the Bible, 332–3
and Christian Hebraism, 59–64
confrontation between Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, 64–6
conversions and conversion policies during the, 31–8

diminished tensions after the Thirty Years' War, 70–2
in Germany, 50–6
and the Reformed Church, 56–8
and toleration of Jews in the Dutch Republic, 68–70
and treatment of European Jews, 15–17, 380–1, 951–2
triple crisis during the, 15–22
Provenzali, David, 414
Pullan, Brian, 218

qahal. *See kahal*
Qazvini, Muhammad Tahir, 1050, 1051

rabbinic ban. *See ḥerem*
rabbinic culture
and adherence to civil law, 353–5
economic integration and, 369–73
and the European Enlightenment, 669–73
and magic, 477
and migration, 350–2
and printing, 357–63
rabbinic law. *See bet din*; Halakhah
rabbis. *See also* leadership
communal authority of, 174–5, 611
in Habsburg Empire, 774
in Ottoman lands, 847
as teachers, 412
Radbaz, the. *See* David ibn Abi Zimra
Rahabi, Ezekiel, 1043
Raziel ha-Malakh, 477
Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon, 1064
Recanati, Menaḥem, 448
record-keeping. *See also pinkasim*
early modern Jewish communities, 176–9
of *ḥevrot*, 186
Reformed Church. *See also* Calvinism; Protestant Reformation
in the Dutch Republic, 68–70, 403–4
and Judaism, 56–8
reformed services (Berlin), 759
reincarnation
and kabbalistic rituals, 464
and mysticism, 451
in Sabbatean and Frankist mysticism, 618–19
religious devotion. *See also* morals
acceptable latitude in, 677–83
in eastern Europe, 607–23
and gentile wine, 691–704
in Italian ghettos, 876–7
and women's ritual bathing, 683–91
religious identity blurring. *See conversos*
responsa literature, 610
Reubeni, David, 421
Reuchlin, Johannes
and banned books, 52–3
and Christian Hebraism, 316–18
on contemporary Jews, 343–4
De accentibus, 344, 721
on Jewish legal rights, 29
on preventing destruction of Jewish texts, 320–1
Rudimenta, 318
Revolutionary War (American), 1009–13
Rhegius, Urbanus, 66
Ribiero, Samuel Nunes, 1002
Riesser, Gabriel, 1061
ritual baths. *See mikveh*
ritual murder accusations
after baptisms, 65–6
and Catholic Church, 39, 41–2, 54, 248–9
and Council of the Four Lands, 810–11
Jew of Bourges (story), 42
Jewish fear of, 24
and Papal Inquisition, 35
in Poland, 826
robber bands, 750
Rodney, George, 991
Roman Inquisition. *See* Papal Inquisition
Roman law
Jewish citizenship under, 22
parental rights under, 17–18
Rosanes, Judah, 857
Rosman, Moshe, 818, 1095
Rossi, Azariah de, 1100, 1104
Rossi, Giovanni Bernardo de, 885
Rossi, Salamone, 724, 728
Rovigo, Abraham, 510–13, 879
Rovira Bonet, Francisco, 42
Ruderman, David, 4, 570
Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor, 69
Rürup, Reinhard, 1062
Russia. *See also* Pale of Settlement
emigration of Jews to, 233–4
Jewish emancipation in, 1084–5

Saba, Abraham, 327, 440, 448
Sabbatai Zevi
and Glückel of Hameln, 752
impact on the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 816–17
life and teachings of, 493–504
and Lurianic Kabbalah, 464, 484
as messiah, 491–3, 617–18

Sabbatean movement. *See also* messianism
in the Caribbean, 982–4
in Germany, 752–4
in the Habsburg Empire, 775–7
in Italy, 878
and the life and teachings of Sabbatai Zevi, 493–504
in the Ottoman Empire, 843
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 800, 816–17
Sabbatean mysticism. *See also* Kabbalah
after the death of Sabbatai Zevi, 510–20
reasons for the success of, 491–3, 504–10, 627, 749
as threat to eastern European religious tradition, 617–18
Sabra, Abba, 1027
Safavid Dynasty, 1046–52
Safed
as center of Kabbalah, 458–61
Lurianic Kabbalah in, 461–5
Salanter, Israel, 820
Salomon, Haym, 1012
Salonika, 409, 846
Salvador, Joseph, 962
Sanhedrin, 941–2, 1080
Saraiva, António José, 215
Saraval, Jacob, 881–2
Sarmad, Sa'id, 1036
Sarna, Jonathan, 567–8
Sartorius, J.A., 1038–9
Sarug, Israel, 451–2, 480–1, 857
Sarukḥān, 98
Sasportas, Jacob, 518
Satanow, Isaac, 480
Saul of Berlin, 299–300
Schick, Barukh ben Yaakov, 622, 820–1
Schilling, Heinz, 379, 402–3
scholars. *See* intellectuals
scholastic philosophy, 529–31
Scholem, Gershom
authority of, 504–6
controversy over, 509
modernity of, 1090
on Sabbatean mysticism, 492, 518–19
on the term "early modern", 2–3
Zionism, 749
Schudt, Johann Jakob, 72, 722
Schwartz, Georg, 67
science
antisemitism and, 936–8
astronomy, 536, 616–17
in Italy, 529–32
and rabbinic law, 539–40
secularization of, 542–3
scientific rationalism
in Italy, 879–80
in the Ottoman Empire, 855
in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 820–1
as threat to eastern European religious tradition, 616–17
Scientific Revolution, 538–40
Scott, Walter, 999
secularization
of Habsburg Jews, 780–5
and Hasidism, 649–50
and Jewish citizenship, 19–20
of Jewish education, 419–20, 790–1
and Jewish integration, 26–7
in London, 966–7
and music, 723
and science, 542–3
tension with religious Jewish communities, 174–6
versus the Catholic Church, 41
and Yiddish literature, 287–9
Sefer Hasidim, 609
segregation
during the Papal Inquisition, 44
early modern economic, 160–2
in the Habsburg Empire, 768–9, 787
of Jews from Christians, 247–50
in the Ottoman Empire, 839–40
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 613
of Yemenite Jews, 1026
Seixas, Moses, 1004, 1016
sejm. *See* Four-Year Sejm
self-government. *See* autonomy; community organization; *kehillah*; *pinkasim*
Selim I, Ottoman Sultan, 89
Selim II, Ottoman Sultan, 263
Selwood, Jacob, 1067
Semah, Joseph, 1037
Sennett, Richard, 1064
Sephardic Jews. *See also* Ashkenazic Jews
communal discipline, 400–5
in the Dutch Republic
economic decline, 895
Hebrew literacy, 909–12
religious devotion, 914
Golden Age of the, 83–4, 897, 903
hierarchy
community organization, 389–91
leadership role of the social elite, 382–4

social status, 94, 391–3
Iberian Marranos and the, 381–2
influence over Jewish culture, 104–5
Judeo-Spanish language, 257, 259–60, 264–5
migration
to the Caribbean, 982–3, 988
and rabbinic authority, 350–2
parnasim, 384–91, 402, 875, 978, 979, 991
philosemitic mercantilism, 146–55
and port Jews, 554, 558–60
religion
confessionalization, 378–81
heterodoxy and dissent, 393–400
influence of Protestantism, 380–1
leadership, 386–9
role of the *mahamad*, 384–6
and *Shulḥan Arukh*, 361–2
transition from moneylending to commerce, 140–6
sermons. *See* homiletics
servants, 115–16, 191, 824
Sessa, Guiseppe, 18, 26, 43–4
Seven Years' War, 433, 765, 770, 781, 789
Sevi, Sabbatai. *See* Sabbatai Zevi
sexual behavior
cultural interpretations of, 677–83
in homiletics, 427
Shakespeare, William, 311, 949
Shakhnah, Shalom, 640
Shapira, Nathan, 702–3
Shimon bar Yoḥai, Shimon, 446
Shneur Zalman of Liadi, 642
Shohet, Azriel, 554
Shulḥan Arukh, 359–63, 857, 914, *See also* Halakhah; Karo, Joseph
Sigonio, Carlo, 341
Silva, Antonio José da, 222
Simon of Lubtsch, 628
sin
and Hasidim, 636–7
and the Lurianic Kabbalah, 462–3
sexual, 677–83
Sintzheim, David, 942
Sirat, Colette, 291
Sixtus IV, Pope, 29–31
slave trade, 984, 987, 990–2, 1005
Slonik, Benjamin Aaron ben Abraham, 283, 613
social status, Jewish. *See also* privileges
and communal membership, 190–1, 236
in early modern legal matters, 125–31
and figurative art, 715–16
and the Hasidic movement, 826–7
and *hevrot*, 185–6
in the Ottoman Empire, 103
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 134–5, 235–6, 580, 612–13, 807
and the population distribution of Habsburg Jewry, 768–9
restrictions on
by the Catholic Church, 883–6
economic, 582
in Germany, 742
in the Habsburg Empire, 768–9
land ownership, 588
in Sephardic communities, 142–3, 382–4, 391–3
of talmudic study, 246–7
Sofer, Moses (the Ḥatam Sofer), 779, 794
Sorkin, David, 556–66, 1062, 1102–5
Southern African Jewry, 1032–4
Spain. *See also* Iberia
mass migration from following the Black Death, 78–9
medieval Jewish governance in, 170–4
transoceanic expansion of, 151–2
Spanish Inquisition. *See* Iberian Inquisitions
Spinoza, Baruch, 70, 397–8, 757, 1100
Stammbücher, 309
Starn, Randolph, 1092
status. *See* social status, Jewish
stereotypes
and early modern economic practices, 160–2
of Jews as dogs, 20–1, 26, 205
of Jews in England, 958–9
of Jews in North America, 997–9
Stern, Abraham, 821
Sternhartz, Natan, 644
Stouppe, Jean-Baptiste, 70
Stow, Kenneth, 1064
Stuyvesant, Pieter, 1000
Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, 1094
Surat, 1037, 1038–41
sürgün policy, 81–3, 845, *See also* demographic change, Jewish; Ottoman Empire
Suriname
population distribution in, 975–7
poverty in, 988
privileges in, 985–8
Susannis, Marquardus de
civil servitude, 28, 43–4
limited citizenship, 20–1, 26
millennial expectations, 31
Swetschinski, Daniel, 1092
synagogue
architecture, 710–12
cantors in, 726–8

synagogue (cont.)
cultural importance of, 189–90
as loan collateral, 599
as a necessity of Jewish community, 86
Ottoman Empire restrictions on, 89
responsibilities within a, 1015

takkanot, 771–5
Talmud. *See also pilpul*; *yeshivot*
Babylonian, 855
censorship of, 329
in Halakhah, 368–9
importance of in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 243–5
legal principles for communal governance, 171–4
Palestinian, 296, 326–7
scholarly status of, 246–7
study of in *yeshivot*, 416–17
translations of, 337–9
tavern keeping, 590, 593, 594–5, 824
taxes
in early modern Jewish institutions, 180–91
kropka, 598
in the Ottoman Empire, 102–3, 845–6
in Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 596
for protection in the Holy Roman Empire, 115–16
Tellez, Balthazar, 1028
Ten Lost Tribes
in Cochin, 1042–4
in India, 1038–42
myth of the, 1022–3
Teter, Magda, 825
textile manufacturing
in the Ottoman Empire, 100, 854
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 586
in Yemen, 1025
Thirty Years' War
Court Jews in the, 154
and diminished tensions between Protestants and Catholics, 70–2
and the end of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 799
Jewish population increase during, 63, 229–30
and the Protestant Reformation, 747
tikkunei avonot, 462–3
Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava, 263
tkhines, 468, 486, 614, 815, *See also* liturgy, Jewish
Toland, John, 1069
Toledo, Abraham, 265
toleration
and Jewish Emancipation, 1068–77
in North America, 1016, 1019
in the Ottoman Empire, 91–3
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 247–50
terms of, 114–21
Toleration Tax (Hungary), 790
Tomer Devorah, 466, 467
Torah
and social status, 613
validity of Jews studying other material, 523–4
Torres, Francisco de, 33
trade. *See also* economic activity
in the Caribbean, 974
conversos and, 155–60
diaspora, 155–60
and Jewish roles in eastern Mediterranean, 148–51
in the Ottoman Empire, 851–3
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 587–8
and port Jews, 566–8
and rabbinic culture, 370–2
and slaves, 984, 987, 990–2, 1005
Trent, William, 1006
Trieste, 556–7
Tsemaḥ, Jacob, 857
Turkish language, 859–61
tutors. *See also* education
in eastern Europe, 415
in Italy, 411–15
and social segregation, 613
women as, 816
tzaddikim, 619–20, 633–5, 640, 644–6, 801, *See also ba'alei shem*
Tzoref, Joshua Heschel, 513–14

Ukraine
increase of Jewish population in, 232–3
Khmelnytsky uprising in, 747–8
tavern keeping in, 590
Ulrich, Johann Caspar, 72–3
United Provinces. *See* Dutch Republic
Usselincx, Willem, 981

va'adim, 238–41, 248. *See also* eastern Europe
Venice
conversions and conversion policies in, 264–5
ghetto in, 872–7, 888

Jewish roles in the trading diaspora, 148–51
vernacular language
books in, 308–11, 330–1
German in eastern Europe as, 802
homiletics delivered in, 423
and Kabbalah, 468
for science and philosophy, 543–5
Vidas. Elijah de, 460, 466, 467
Vital, David, 1059
Vital, Ḥayyim
Etz Ḥayyim, 479
on exorcisms, 478–84
on mysticism, 462, 464
Sefer ha-Tekhunah, 479
on women mystics, 485–6
Vitale, Benjamin ben Eliezer ha-Kohen, 701–2
Vitas, Sabbatai, 271
Voltaire, 1069–70

Wagenseil, Johann Christoph, 71
Walsham, Alexandra, 1063
wars
conscription of Jews in, 791–2
and Court Jews, 786–7
economic destruction, 598–600
impact in Habsburg economy, 770–1
impact in Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 584
military provisioners, Jews as, 841, 869, 870
Washington, George, 1016
Wessely, Napthali Herz (Hartwig)
Divrei Shalom ve-Emet, 888, 1105
and the Edict of Toleration, 1073
on Jewish modernization, 1105
on language and education, 656–60
on maritime locations and Jewish culture, 564
on modern school curriculum, 420
West African Jewry, 1030–2
West India Company, 1000
western Europe. *See also* eastern Europe
during the Papal Inquisition, 38
eighteenth-century incorporation of legal structures into, 194–6
governance as example, 172
impact of the French Revolution on, 1077–85
Jewish communal taxation in, 180–91
Jewish emigration to, 837
Jewish use of civil courts in, 193–4
philosemitic mercantilism in, 146–55
record keeping in, 176–9
trading diaspora, 155–60
Westjuden. *See* German Jewry
Westphalia, Peace of, 747
White, William, 1011
Whitehall Conference, 953–4
wine merchants
gentile, 691–704
in the Ottoman Empire, 101, 851
women
economic activity in Italy, 868
and Hasidism, 646
moral education, 613–14, 815–16
and music, 721–2
in the Ottoman Empire, 858–9
religious conversion for civic rights, 758
ritual bathing and, 683–91
Worms, Aaron, 942

Yaacov ben Itzhak Ashkenazi, of Janow, 283
Yehudah ben El'azar, 1055
Yemenite Jewry, 1023–6
Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim, 215, 1090
yeshivot, 939, *See also* education; *ḥeder*; Talmud
Ashkenazic, 773
in the Habsburg Empire, 773
in Italy, 413, 416–17
in the Ottoman Empire, 855
in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, 408, 813–15
prestige of head of, 417
science and philosophy in, 523
for talmudic study, 416–17
Yiddish language
and Ashkenazic Jewry, 608
birth of, 274–5
and broadening of Jewish culture, 287–9
dialects of, 276–8
in the Dutch Republic, 909–12
early history, 226
and the invention of printing, 278–81
kabbalistic literature in, 468, 627
literature, 281–3
and mysticism, 285–7, 486
popularity of, 802
science and philosophy in, 543–5
and the secondary intelligentsia, 284–5
transition from old to modern, 275–6
women's, 613–14
Yossel of Kleck, 616, 628

Zacuto, Moses, 700, 878
Zamość, Israel of, 541
Zasius, Ulrich
on baptism, 17–18

Zasius, Ulrich (cont.)
and book burning, 29
on Jewish submission, 27
Zeeden, Ernst, 379
Zemah, Jacob, 481
Zevi, Sabbetai. *See* Sabbatai Zevi
Zionism
beginning with the Haskalah, 744
as a form of messianism, 519
Sabbateanism as proto-Zionism, 749
Zohar, the
and Italian Kabbalah, 449–50
kabbalistic use and authority, 365–7
Naḥalat Tsvi, 468
in North Africa, 442–4
in the Ottoman Empire, 855
popularization of, 444–7
printing of, 425, 452–5
women's access to, 468
Zohar Gadol, 454
Zohar Katan, 454
Zunz, Leopold, 1061